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MAURINE

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

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MAURINE.

MAURINE

By

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

ILLUSTRATED

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Jans Matzene

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CHICAGO
W. B. CONKEY COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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MAURINE

ILLUSTRATED WITH
PHOTOGRAPHIC
LIFE STUDIES

ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE.

Maurine ..... *Frontispiece*

Helen ..... *Frontispiece*

"*Like pleasant waters*" ..... *Frontispiece*

"*Mellow with sunlight*" 17

"*No need to turn my head*" 19

"*Beauteous was that morn in early June*" 23

"*Maurine's sweet smile becomes a frown*" 26

"*He looked so melancholy sitting there*" 29

"*Summer flowers*" 33

"*In noonday skies*" 35

"*A blissful sense of peace*" 37

"*The passing hours*" 39

"*In this sweet calm*" 40

"*In the summer weather*" 41

"*With apron o'er her head*" 43

"*Helen was bending o'er an almond bush*" 45

"*A single flowret in my hair*" 47

"*Like the deep blue of autumnal skies*" 50

ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE.

"Like the white cloud at sunrise" 53

"Like gentle winds among the trees" 57

"Took my hand in his" 61

"Twilight shadows" 63

"A grander man I never yet have seen" 66

"The borders of the lake" 67

"Helen and I went wandering hand in hand" 69

"The ripe wheat field" 71

"It was a day for dreams" 73

"The last of Indian-summer days" 75

"If that one ship came back to me" 79

"There's where the lilies grow" 83

"I turned and looked up at the slim young moon" 87

"She nestled at my feet" 91

"The moon went down" 95

"The storm had come upon me" 97

"On God's broad breast" 102

"With it came smiles to Nature's face" 103

"So Roy was coming" 105

'Bleak winds that blow from Arctic lands" 109

"All sad with lonely wind and rain" 112

"Stay! One moment, Vivian" 115

"The harvest moon" 119

"Golden weather" 121

"Some steep mountain" 125

"The sunshine of an April day" 129

ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE.

'The roof of kin" *136*

"A cave some miles away" *137*

"Sweet whispered words of passion" *141*

"We reached the forest" *144*

"My friendship melted into love" *147*

"Like some unearthly creature of a dream" *151*

"Took me gently to his breast" *155*

"The billows of the sea" *160*

"The Autumn day" *163*

"Winter, crisp and chill" *165*

"The woods had donned their purple mantles" *168*

"With vision trance-like" *169*

"The last imposing, binding words were said" *173*

"May came, lightsome footed" *177*

"Conscious of a something lacking" *180*

"Cloudless day" *185*

"Alps of Switzerland" *187*

"Th' upreaching oak" *192*

"His child" *193*

"The fields, the wood, the lake" *195*

"I leave a soul immortal in your charge" *199*

"My childhood's home" *205*

"Lo! the bridegroom" *209*

"I sat in that same sunny portico" *213*

"Laid her downy cheek against her father" *219*

Tail-piece *222*

"Like pleasant waters."

I step across the mystic border-land,
And look upon the wonder-world of Art.
How beautiful, how beautiful its hills!
And all its valleys, how surpassing fair!

The winding paths that lead up to the heights
Are polished by the footsteps of the great.
The mountain-peaks stand very near to God:
The chosen few whose feet have trod thereon
Have talked with Him, and with the angels walked.

Here are no sounds of discord—no profane
Or senseless gossip of unworthy things—
Only the songs of chisels and of pens,
Of busy brushes, and ecstatic strains
Of souls surcharged with music most divine.
Here is no idle sorrow, no poor grief
For any day or object left behind—
For time is counted precious, and herein
Is such complete abandonment of Self
That tears turn into rainbows, and enhance
The beauty of the land where all is fair.

Awed and afraid, I cross the border-land.
Oh, who am I, that I dare enter here
Where the great artists of the world have trod -
The genius-crowned aristocrats of Earth?
Only the singer of a little song;
Yet loving Art with such a mighty love
I hold it greater to have won a place
Just on the fair land's edge, to make my grave,
Than in the outer world of greed and gain
To sit upon a royal throne and reign.

HELEN.

MAURINE

"Mellow with sunlight."

PART I.

I SAT and sewed, and sang some tender tune,
Oh, beauteous was that morn in early June!
Mellow with sunlight, and with blossoms fair:
The climbing rose-tree grew about me there,
And checked with shade the sunny portico
Where, morns like this, I came to read, or sew.

I heard the gate click, and a firm tread
Upon the walk. No need to turn my head;
I would mistake, and doubt my own voice sounding,

Before his step upon the gravel bounding.
In an unstudied attitude of grace,
He stretched his comely form; and from his face
He tossed the dark, damp curls; and at my knees,
With his broad hat he fanned the lazy breeze,
And turned his head, and lifted his large eyes,
Of that strange hue we see in ocean dyes,
And call it blue sometimes, and sometimes green,
And save in poet eyes, not elsewhere seen.
"Lest I should meet with my fair lady's scorning,
For calling quite so early in the morning,
I've brought a passport that can never fail,"
He said, and, laughing, laid the morning mail
Upon my lap. "I'm welcome? so I thought!
I'll figure by the letters that I brought
How glad you are to see me. Only one?
And that one from a lady? I'm undone!
That, lightly skimmed, you'll think me *such* a bore,
And wonder why I did not bring you four.
It's ever thus: a woman cannot get
So many letters that she will not fret
O'er one that did not come."
"I'll prove you wrong,"
I answered gayly, "here upon the spot!
This little letter, precious if not long,
Is just the one, of all you might have brought,
To please me. You have heard me speak, I'm sure,

"No need to turn my head."

Of Helen Trevor: she writes here to say
She's coming out to see me; and will stay
Till Autumn, maybe. She is, like her note,
Petite and dainty, tender, loving, pure.
You'd know her by a letter that she wrote,
For a sweet tinted thing. 'Tis always so:—
Letters all blots, though finely written, show
A slovenly person. Letters stiff and white
Bespeak a nature honest, plain, upright.
And tissuey, tinted, perfumed notes, like this,
Tell of a creature formed to pet and kiss."
My listener heard me with a slow, odd smile;
Stretched in abandon at my feet, the while,
He fanned me idly with his broad-brimmed hat.
"Then all young ladies must be formed for that!"
He laughed, and said.
"Their letters read, and look,
As like as twenty copies of one book.
They're written in a dainty, spider scrawl,
To 'darling, precious Kate,' or 'Fan,' or 'Moll.'
The 'dearest, sweetest' friend they ever had.
They say they 'want to see you, oh, so bad!"
Vow they'll 'forget you, never, *never*, oh!'
And then they tell about a splendid beau—
A lovely hat—a charming dress, and send
A little scrap of this to every friend.
And then to close, for lack of something better,

They beg you'll 'read and burn this horrid letter.'

He watched me, smiling. He was prone to vex
And hector me with flings upon my sex.
He liked, he said, to have me flash and frown,
So he could tease me, and then laugh me down.
My storms of wrath amused him very much:
He liked to see me go off at a touch;
Anger became me—made my color rise,
And gave an added luster to my eyes.
So he would talk—and so he watched me now,
To see the hot flush mantle cheek and brow.

Instead, I answered coolly, with a smile,
Felling a seam with utmost care, meanwhile.
"The caustic tongue of Vivian Dangerfield
Is barbed as ever, for my sex, this morn.
Still unconvinced, no smallest point I yield.
Women I love and trust, despite your scorn.
There is some truth in what you say? Well, yes
Your statements usually hold more or less.
Some women write weak letters—(some men do;
Some make professions, knowing them untrue.
And woman's friendship, in the time of need,
I own, too often proves a broken reed.
But I believe, and ever will contend,

"Beauteous was that morn in early June."

Woman can be a sister woman's friend,
Giving from out her large heart's bounteous store
A living love—claiming to do no more
Than, through and by that love, she knows she can;
And living by her professions, *like a man.*
And such a tie, true friendship's silken tether,
Binds Helen Trevor's heart and mine together.
I love her for her beauty, meekness, grace;
For her white lily soul and angel face.
She loves me, for my greater strength, may be;
Loves—and would give her heart's best blood for me.
And I, to save her from a pain, or cross,
Would suffer any sacrifice or loss.
Such can be woman's friendship for another.
Could man give more, or ask more from a brother?"
I paused: and Vivian leaned his massive head
Against the pillar of the portico,
Smiled his slow, skeptic smile, then laughed, and said:
"Nay, surely not—if what you say be so.
You've made a statement, but no proof's at hand.
Wait—do not flash your eyes so! Understand
I think you quite sincere in what you say:
You love your friend, and she loves you, to-day;

"Maurine's sweet smile becomes a frown."

But friendship is not friendship at the best
Till circumstances put it to the test.
Man's, less demonstrative, stands strain and tear,
While woman's, half profession, fails to wear.
Two women love each other passing well—
Say Helen Trevor and Maurine La Pelle,
Just for example.

Let them daily meet
At ball and concert, in the church and street,
They kiss and coo, they visit, chat, caress;
Their love increases, rather than grows less;
And all goes well, till 'Helen dear' discovers
That 'Maurine darling' wins too many lovers.

And then her precious friend,' her 'pet,' her 'sweet,'
Becomes a 'minx,' a 'creature all deceit.'
Let Helen smile too oft on Maurine's beaux,
Or wear more stylish or becoming clothes,
Or sport a hat that has a longer feather—
And lo! the strain has broken 'friendship's tether.'
Maurine's sweet smile becomes a frown or pout;
'She's just begun to find that Helen out.'
The breach grows wider—anger fills each heart;
They drift asunder whom 'but death could part.'
You shake your head? Oh, well, we'll never know!
It is not likely Fate will test you so.
You'll live, and love; and, meeting twice a year,
While life shall last, you hold each other dear.
I pray it may be so; it were not best
To shake your faith in woman by the test.
Keep your belief, and nurse it while you can.
I've faith in woman's friendship too—for man!
They're true as steel, as mothers, friends, and wives:
And that's enough to bless us all our lives.

That man's a selfish fellow, and a bore,
Who is unsatisfied, and asks for more."

"But there is need of more!" I here broke in.
"I hold that woman guilty of a sin,
Who would not cling to, and defend another,
As nobly as she would stand by a brother.
Who would not suffer for a sister's sake,
And, were there need to prove her friendship, make
'Most any sacrifice, nor count the cost.
Who would not do this for a friend is lost
To every nobler principle."
"Shame, shame!"
Cried Vivian, laughing, "for you now defame
The whole sweet sex; since there's not one would do
The thing you name, nor would I want her to.
I love the sex. My mother was a woman—
I hope my wife will be, and wholly human.
And if she wants to make some sacrifice,
I'll think her far more sensible and wise
To let her husband reap the benefit,
Instead of some old maid or senseless chit.
Selfish? Of course! I hold all love is so:
And I shall love my wife right well, I know.
Now there's a point regarding selfish love,
You thirst to argue with me, and disprove.
But since these cosy hours will soon be gone

"He looked so melancholy sitting there."

And all our meetings broken in upon,
No more of these rare moments must be spent
In vain discussions, or in argument.
I wish Miss Trevor was in—Jericho!
(You see the selfishness begins to show.)
She wants to see you?—So do I: but she
Will gain her wish, by taking you from me.
'Come all the same?' that means I'll be allowed
To realize that 'three can make a crowd.'
I do not like to feel myself *de trop.*
With two girl cronies would I not be so?
My ring would interrupt some private chat.
You'd ask me in and take my cane and hat,
And speak about the lovely summer day,
And think—'The lout! I wish he'd kept away.'
Miss Trevor'd smile, but just to hide a pout
And count the moments till I was shown out.
And, while I twirled my thumbs, I should sit wishing
That I had gone off hunting birds, or fishing.
No, thanks, Maurine! The iron hand of Fate,
(Or otherwise Miss Trevor's dainty fingers,)
Will bar my entrance into Eden's gate;
And I shall be like some poor soul that lingers
At heaven's portal, paying the price of sin,
Yet hoping to be pardoned and let in."

He looked so melancholy sitting there,
I laughed outright. "How well you act a part;
You look the very picture of despair!
You've missed your calling, sir! suppose you start
Upon a starring tour, and carve your name
With Booth's and Barrett's on the heights of Fame.
But now, tabooing nonsense, I shall send
For you to help me entertain my friend,
Unless you come without it. 'Cronies?' True,
Wanting our 'private chats' as cronies do.
And we'll take those, while you are reading Greek,
Or writing 'Lines to Dora's brow' or 'cheek.'
But when you have an hour or two of leisure,
Call as you now do, and afford like pleasure.
For never yet did heaven's sun shine on,
Or stars discover that phenomenon,
In any country, or in any clime:
Two maids so bound, by ties of mind and heart,
They did not feel the heavy weight of time
In weeks of scenes wherein no man took part.
God made the sexes to associate:
Nor law of man, nor stern decree of Fate,
Can ever undo what His hand has done,
And, quite alone, make happy either one.
My Helen is an only child:—a pet
Of loving parents: and she never yet
Has been denied one boon for which she pleaded.

"Summer flowers."

"In noonday skies."

A fragile thing, her lightest wish was heeded.
Would she pluck roses? they must first be shorn,
By careful hands, of every hateful thorn.
And loving eyes must scan the pathway where
Her feet may tread, to see no stones are there.
She'll grow dull here, in this secluded nook,
Unless you aid me in the pleasant task
Of entertaining. Drop in with your book—
Read, talk, sing for her sometimes. What I ask,
Do once to please me: then there'll be no need
For me to state the case again, or plead.
There's nothing like a woman's grace and beauty
To waken mankind to a sense of duty."

"I bow before the mandate of my queen:
Your slightest wish is law, Ma Belle Maurine,"
He answered smiling, "I'm at your command;

Point but one lily finger, or your wand,
And you will find a willing slave obeying.
There goes my dinner bell! I hear it saying
I've spent two hours here, lying at your feet,
Not profitable, maybe--surely sweet.
All time is money: now were I to measure
The time I spend here by its solid pleasure,
And that were coined in dollars, then I've laid
Each day a fortune at your feet, fair maid.
There goes that bell again! I'll say good-bye,
Or clouds will shadow my domestic sky.
I'll come again, as you would have me do,
And see your friend, while she is seeing you.
That's like by proxy being at a feast;
Unsatisfactory, to say the least."
He drew his fine shape up, and trod the land
With kingly grace. Passing the gate, his hand
He lightly placed the garden wall upon,
Leaped over like a leopard, and was gone.

And, going, took the brightness from the place,
Yet left the June day with a sweeter grace,
And my young soul so steeped in happy dreams,
Heaven itself seemed shown to me in gleams.

There is a time with lovers, when the heart
First slowly rouses from its dreamless sleep,
To all the tumult of a passion life,

"A blissful sense of peace."

Ere yet have wakened jealousy and strife.
Just as a young, untutored child will start
Out of a long hour's slumber, sound and deep,
And lie and smile with rosy lips, and cheeks,
In a sweet, restful trance, before it speaks.
A time when yet no word the spell has broken,
Save what the heart unto the soul has spoken

In quickened throbs, and sighs but half-suppressed.
A time when that sweet truth, all unconfessed,
Gives added fragrance to the summer flowers,
A golden glory to the passing hours,
A hopeful beauty to the plainest face,
And lends to life a new and tender grace.

When the full heart has climbed the heights of bliss,
And, smiling, looks back o'er the golden past,
I think it finds no sweeter hour than this
In all love-life. For, later, when the last
Translucent drop o'erflows the cup of joy,
And love, more mighty than the heart's control,
Surges in words of passion from the soul,
And vows are asked and given, shadows rise
Like mists before the sun in noonday skies,
Vague fears, that prove the brimming cup's alloy:
A dread of change—the crowning moment's curse,
Since what is perfect, change but renders worse:
A vain desire to cripple Time, who goes
Bearing our joys away, and bringing woes.
And later, doubts and jealousies awaken,
And plighted hearts are tempest-tossed, and shaken.
Doubt sends a test, that goes a step too far,
A wound is made, that, healing, leaves a scar,

"The passing hours."

Or one heart, full with love's sweet satisfaction,
Thinks truth once spoken always understood,
While one is pining for the tender action
And whispered word by which, of old, 'twas wooed,
But this blest hour, in love's glad, golden day
Is like the dawning, ere the radiant ray
Of glowing Sol has burst upon the eye,

But yet is heralded in earth and sky,
Warm with its fervor, mellow with its light,
While Care still slumbers in the arms of night.
But Hope, awake, hears happy birdlings sing,
And thinks of all a summer day may bring.

In this sweet calm, my young heart lay at rest,
Filled with a blissful sense of peace; nor guessed
That sullen clouds were gathering in the skies
To hide the glorious sun, ere it should rise.

"In this sweet calm."

"In the summer weather."

PART II.

TO little birds that never tire of humming
About the garden, in the summer weather,
Aunt Ruth compared us, after Helen's coming,
As we two roamed, or sat and talked together.
Twelve months apart, we had so much to say
Of school days gone—and time since passed away;
Of that old friend, and this; of what we'd done;
Of how our separate paths in life had run;
Of what we would do in the coming years;
Of plans and castles, hopes and dreams and fears.
All these, and more, as soon as we found speech,

We touched upon, and skimmed from this to that,
But at the first, each only gazed on each,
And, dumb with joy, that did not need a voice
Like lesser joys, to say, "Lo! I rejoice,"
With smiling eyes and clasping hands we sat
Wrapped in that peace, felt but with those dear,
Contented just to know each other near.
But when this silent eloquence gave place
To words, 'twas like the rising of a flood
Above a dam. We sat there, face to face,
And let our talk glide on where'er it would,
Speech never halting in its speed or zest,
Save when our rippling laughter let it rest;
Just as a stream will sometimes pause and play
About a bubbling spring, then dash away.
No wonder, then, the third day's sun was nigh
Up to the zenith when my friend and I
Opened our eyes from slumber long and deep:
Nature demanding recompense for hours
Spent in the portico, among the flowers,
Halves of two nights we should have spent in sleep.

So this third day we breakfasted at one:
Then walked about the garden in the sun,
Hearing the thrushes and the robins sing,
And looking to see what buds were opening.

"With apron o'er her head."

The clock chimed three, and we yet strayed at will
About the yard in morning dishabille,
When Aunt Ruth came, with apron o'er her head
Holding a letter in her hand, and said,
"Here is a note, from Vivian I opine;
At least his servant brought it. And now, girls,
You may think this is no concern of mine,
But in my day young ladies did not go,

Till almost bed-time roaming to and fro
In morning wrappers, and with tangled curls,
The very pictures of forlorn distress.
'Tis three o'clock, and time for you to dress.
Come! read your note and hurry in, Maurine,
And make yourself fit object to be seen."

Helen was bending o'er an almond bush,
And ere she looked up I had read the note,
And calmed my heart, that, bounding, sent a flush
To brow and cheek, at sight of aught *he* wrote.
"Ma Belle Maurine:" (so Vivian's billet ran,)
"Is it not time I saw your cherished guest?
'Pity the sorrows of a poor young man,'
Banished from all that makes existence blest.
I'm dying to see—your friend; and I will come
And pay respects, hoping you'll be at home
To-night at eight. Expectantly, V. D."

Inside my belt I slipped the billet, saying,
"Helen, go make yourself most fair to see;
Quick! hurry now! no time for more delaying!
In just five hours a caller will be here,
And you must look your prettiest, my dear!
Begin your toilet right away. I know
How long it takes you to arrange each bow—
To twist each curl, and loop your skirts aright.

"Helen was bending o'er an almond bush."

And you must prove you are *au fait* to-night,
And make a perfect toilet: for our caller
Is man, and critic, poet, artist, scholar,
And views with eyes of all."
"Oh, oh! Maurine,"
Cried Helen, with a well-feigned look of fear,
"You've frightened me so I shall not appear:
I'll hide away, refusing to be seen

By such an ogre. Woe is me! bereft
Of all my friends, my peaceful home I've left,
And strayed away into the dreadful wood
To meet the fate of poor Red Riding Hood.
No, Maurine, no! you've given me such a fright,
I'll not go near your ugly wolf to-night."
Meantime we'd left the garden; and I stood
In Helen's room, where she had thrown herself
Upon a couch, and lay, a winsome elf,
Pouting and smiling, cheek upon her arm,
Not in the least a portrait of alarm.
"Now, sweet!" I coaxed, and knelt by her, "be good!"
Go curl your hair; and please your own Maurine
By putting on that lovely grenadine.
Not wolf, nor ogre, neither Caliban,
Nor Mephistopheles, you'll meet to-night,
But what the ladies call 'a nice young man'!
Yet one worth knowing—strong with health and might
Of perfect manhood; gifted, noble, wise;
Moving among his kind with loving eyes
And helpful hand; progressive, brave, refined,
After the image of his Maker's mind."

"Now, now, Maurine!" cried Helen, "I believe
It is your lover coming here this eve.

"A single flowret in my hair."

Why have you never written of him, pray?
Is the day set?—and when? Say, Maurine, say!"

Had I betrayed by some too fervent word
The secret love that all my being stirred?
My lover? Ay! My heart proclaimed him so;
But first *his* lips must win the sweet confession
Ere even Helen be allowed to know.
I must straightway erase the slight impression
Made by the words just uttered.
"Foolish child!"
I gayly cried, "your fancy's straying wild.
Just let a girl of eighteen hear the name
Of maid and youth uttered about one time,
And off her fancy goes, at break-neck pace,
Defying circumstances, reason, space—
And straightway builds romances so sublime
They put all Shakespeare's dramas to the shame.
This Vivian Dangerfield is neighbor, friend
And kind companion; bringing books and flowers,
And, by his thoughtful actions without end,
Helping me pass some otherwise long hours;
But he has never breathed a word of love.
If you still doubt me, listen while I prove
My statement by the letter that he wrote.
'Dying to meet—my friend!' (she could not see
The dash between that meant so much to me.)

"Like the deep blue of autumnal skies."

'Will come this eve, at eight, and hopes we may
Be in to greet him.' Now I think you'll say
'Tis not much like a lover's tender note."

We laugh, we jest, not meaning what we say;
We hide our thoughts by light words lightly
spoken,
And pass on heedless, till we find one day
They've bruised our hearts, or left some other
broken.

I sought my room, and trilling some blithe air,
Opened my wardrobe, wondering what to wear.
Momentous question! femininely human!
More than all others vexing mind of woman,
Since that sad day, when in her discontent,
To search for leaves our first fair mother went.
All undecided what I should put on,
At length I made selection of a lawn—
White, with a tiny pink vine overrun:—
My simplest robe, but Vivian's favorite one.

And placing a single flowret in my hair,
I crossed the hall to Helen's chamber, where
I found her with her fair locks all let down,
Brushing the kinks out, with a pretty frown.
Twas like a picture, or a pleasing play,
To watch her make her toilet. She would stand,
And turn her head first this, then that way,
Trying effect of ribbon, bow or band.
Then she would pick up something else, and curve
Her lovely neck with cunning, bird-like grace,
And watch the mirror while she put it on,
With such a sweetly grave and thoughtful face;
And then to view it all would sway, and swerve
Her lithe young body, like a graceful swan.
Helen was over medium height, and slender
Even to frailty. Her great, wistful eyes

Were like the deep blue of autumnal skies;
And through them looked her soul, large, loving,
tender.
Her long, light hair was lusterless, except
Upon the ends, where burnished sunbeams slept,
And on the earlocks; and she looped the curls
Back with a shell comb, studded thick with pearls,
Costly, yet simple. Her pale loveliness,
That night, was heightened by her rich, black dress
That trailed behind her, leaving half in sight
Her taper arms, and shoulders marble white.

I was not tall as Helen, and my face
Was shaped and colored like my grandsire's race;
For through his veins my own received the warm,
Red blood of southern France, which curved my
form,
And glowed upon my cheek in crimson dyes,
And bronzed my hair, and darkled in my eyes
And as the morning trails the skirts of night,
And dusky night puts on the garb of morn,
And walk together when the day is born,
So we two glided down the hall and stair,
Arm clasping arm, into the parlor, where
Sat Vivian, bathed in sunset's gorgeous light.
He rose to greet us. Oh! his form was grand;
And he possessed that power, strange, occult,

"Like the white cloud at sunrise."

Called magnetism, lacking better word,
Which moves the world, achieving great result
Where genius fails completely. Touch his hand,
It thrilled through all your being—meet his eye,
And you were moved, yet knew not how, or why.
Let him but rise, you felt the air was stirred
By an electric current

This strange force
Is mightier than genius. Rightly used,
It leads to grand achievements; all things yield
Before its mystic presence, and its field
Is broad as earth and heaven. But abused,
It sweeps like a poison simoon on its course,
Bearing miasma in its scorching breath,
And leaving all it touches struck with death.
Far-reaching science shall yet tear away
The mystic garb that hides it from the day,
And drag it forth and bind it with its laws,
And make it serve the purposes of men,
Guided by common sense and reason. Then
We'll hear no more of seance, table-rapping,
And all that trash, o'er which the world is gaping,
Lost in effect, while science seeks the cause.
Vivian was not conscious of his power:
Or, if he was, knew not its full extent.
He knew his glance would make a wild beast cower,

And yet he knew not that his large eyes sent
Into the heart of women the same thrill
That made the lion servant of his will.
And even strong men felt it.

He arose,
Reached forth his hand, and in it clasped my own,
While I held Helen's; and he spoke some word
Of pleasant greeting in his low, round tone,
Unlike all other voices I have heard.
Just as the white cloud, at the sunrise, glows
With roseate colors, so the pallid hue
Of Helen's cheek like tinted sea-shells grew.
Through mine, his hand caused hers to tremble:
such
Was the all-mast'ring magic of his touch.

Then we sat down, and talked about the weather,
The neighborhood—some author's last new book
But, when I could, I left the two together
To make acquaintance, saying I must look
After the chickens—my especial care;
And ran away, and left them, laughing, there.

Knee-deep, through clover, to the poplar grove
I waded, where my pets were wont to rove:
And there I found the foolish mother hen
Brooding her chickens underneath a tree,

"Like gentle winds among the trees."

An easy prey for foxes. "Chick-a-dee,"
Quoth I, while reaching for the downy things
That, chirping, peeped from out the mother-wings,
"How very human is your folly! When
There waits a haven, pleasant, bright, and warm,
And one to lead you thither from the storm
And lurking dangers, yet you turn away,
And, thinking to be your own protector, stray
Into the open jaws of death: for, see!
An owl is sitting in this very tree
You thought safe shelter. Go now to your pen."
And, followed by the clucking, clamorous hen,
So like the human mother here again,
Moaning because a strong, protecting arm
Would shield her little ones from cold and harm,
I carried back my garden hat brimful
Of chirping chickens, like white balls of wool,
And snugly housed them.
And just then I heard
A sound like gentle winds among the trees,
Or pleasant waters in the Summer, stirred
And set in motion by a passing breeze.
'Twas Helen singing, and as I drew near,
Another voice, a tenor full and clear,
Mingled with hers, as murmuring streams unite,
And flow on stronger in their wedded might.

It was a way of Helen's, not to sing
The songs that other people sang. She took
Sometimes an extract from an ancient book;
Again, some floating, fragmentary thing,
And such she fitted to old melodies,
Or else composed the music. One of these
She sang that night; and Vivian caught the strain,
And joined her in the chorus, or refrain.

SONG.

O thou, mine other, stronger part!
  Whom yet I cannot hear or see,
Come thou and take this loving heart.
  That longs to yield its all to thee,
  I call mine own—Oh, come to me!
  Love, answer back, I come to thee,
                I come to thee.

This hungry heart, so warm, so large,
  Is far too great a care for me.
I have grown weary of the charge
  I keep so sacredly for thee.
  Come thou, and take my heart from me.
  Love, answer back, I come to thee,
                I come to thee.

I am aweary, waiting here
  For one who tarries long from me.
O! art thou far, or art thou near?
  And must I still be sad for thee?
  Or wilt thou straightway come to me?
  Love, answer, I am near to thee.
                I come to thee.

"Took my hand in his."

"Twilight shadows."

The melody, so full of plaintive chords,
Sobbed into silence—echoing down the strings
Like voice of one who walks from us, and sings.
Vivian had leaned upon the instrument
The while they sang. But, as he spoke those
words,
"Love, I am near to thee, I come to thee,"
He turned his grand head slowly round, and bent
His lustrous, soulful, speaking gaze on me.
And my young heart, eager to own its king,

Sent to my eyes a great, glad, trustful light
Of love and faith, and hung upon my cheek
Hope's rose-hued flag. There was no need to speak.
I crossed the room and knelt by Helen. "Sing
That song you sang a fragment of one night,
Out on the porch, beginning, 'Praise me not,'"
I whispered: and her sweet and plaintive tone
Rose, low and tender, as if she had caught
From some sad passing breeze, and made her own,
The echo of the wind-harp's sighing strain,
Or the soft music of the falling rain.

SONG.

O praise me not with your lips, dear one!
Though your tender words I prize.
But dearer by far is the soulful gaze
Of your eyes, your beautiful eyes,
Your tender, loving eyes.

O chide me not with your lips, dear one!
Though I cause your bosom sighs.
You can make repentance deeper far
By your sad, reproving eyes,
Your sorrowful, troubled eyes.

Words, at the best, are but hollow sounds;
Above, in the beaming skies,
The constant stars say never a word,
But only smile with their eyes—
Smile on with their lustrous eyes.

Then breathe no vow with your lips, dear one;
On the wingèd wind speech flies.
But I read the truth of your noble heart
In your soulful, speaking eyes—
In your deep and beautiful eyes.

The twilight darkened 'round us, in the room,
While Helen sang; and, in the gathering gloom,
Vivian reached out, and took my hand in his,
And held it so; while Helen made the air
Languid with music. Then a step drew near,
And voice of Aunt Ruth broke the spell:
"Dear! dear!
Why Maurie, Helen, children! how is this?
I hear you, but you have no light in there.
Your room is dark as Egypt. What a way
For folks to visit!—Maurie, go, I pray,
And order lamps."
And so there came a light,
And all the sweet dreams hovering around
The twilight shadows flitted in affright:
And e'en the music had a harsher sound.

In pleasant converse passed an hour away
And Vivian planned a picnic for next day—
A drive the next, and rambles without end,
That he might help me entertain my friend.
And then he rose, bowed low, and passed from
sight,

Like some great star that drops out from the night;
And Helen watched him through the shadows go,
And turned and said, her voice subdued and low,
"How tall he is! in all my life, Maurine,
A grander man I never yet have seen."

"A grander man I never yet have seen."

"The borders of the lake."

PART III.

ONE golden twelfth-part of a checkered year;
One summer month, of sunlight, moonlight, mirth,
With not a hint of shadows lurking near,
Or storm-clouds brewing.

'T was a royal day:
Voluptuous July held her lover, Earth,
With her warm arms, upon her glowing breast,
And twined herself about him, as he lay,
Smiling and panting in his dream-stirred rest.

She bound him with her limbs of perfect grace,
And hid him with her trailing robe of green,
And wound him in her long hair's shimmering
sheen,
And rained her ardent kisses on his face.

Through the glad glory of the summer land
Helen and I went wandering, hand in hand.
In winding paths, hard by the ripe wheat-field,
White with the promise of a bounteous yield,
Across the late shorn meadow—down the hill,
Red with the tiger-lily blossoms, till
We stood upon the borders of the lake,
That like a pretty, placid infant, slept
Low at its base: and little ripples crept
Along its surface, just as dimples chase
Each other o'er an infant's sleeping face.

Helen in idle hours had learned to make
A thousand pretty, feminine knick-knacks:
For brackets, ottomans, and toilet stands—
Labor just suited to her dainty hands.
That morning she had been at work in wax,
Molding a wreath of flowers for my room,—
Taking her patterns from the living blows,
In all their dewy beauty and sweet bloom,
Fresh from my garden. Fuchsia, tulip, rose,

"Helen and I went wandering, hand in hand."

"The ripe wheat field."

And trailing ivy, grew beneath her touch,
Resembling the living plants as much
As life is copied in the form of death:
These lacking but the perfume, and that, breath.

And now the wreath was all completed, save
The mermaid blossom of all flowerdom,
A water-lily, dripping from the wave.
And 't was in search of it that we had come
Down to the lake, and wandered on the beach,
To see if any lilies grew in reach.
Some broken stalks, where flowers late had been;
Some buds, with all their beauties folded in,
We found, but not the treasure that we sought.
And then we turned our footsteps to the spot
Where, all impatient of its chain, my boat,
"The Swan," rocked, asking to be set afloat.

It was a dainty row-boat—strong, yet light;
Each side a swan was painted snowy white:
A present from my uncle, just before
He sailed, with Death, to that mysterious strand,
Where freighted ships go sailing evermore,
But none return to tell us of the land.
I freed the "Swan," and slowly rowed about,
Wherever sea-weeds, grass or green leaves lifted
Their tips above the water. So we drifted,
While Helen, opposite, leaned idly out
And watched for lilies in the waves below,
And softly crooned some sweet and dreamy air,
That soothed me like a mother's lullabies.
I dropped the oars, and closed my sun-kissed eyes,
And let the boat go drifting here and there.
Oh, happy day! the last of that brief time
Of thoughtless youth, when all the world seems
bright,
Ere that disguised angel men call Woe
Leads the sad heart through valleys dark as night,
Up to the heights exalted and sublime.
On each blest, happy moment, I am fain
To linger long, ere I pass on to pain
And sorrow that succeeded.

From day-dreams,
As golden as the summer noontide's beams,

"It was a time for dreams."

"The last of Indian-summer days."

I was awakened by a voice that cried:
"Strange ship, ahoy! Fair frigate, whither bound?"
And, starting up, I cast my gaze around,
And saw a sail-boat o'er the water glide
Close to the "Swan," like some live thing of grace;
And from it looked the glowing, handsome face
Of Vivian.

"Beauteous sirens of the sea,
Come sail across the raging main with me!"
He laughed; and leaning, drew our drifting boat
Beside his own. "There, now! step in!" he said,
"I'll land you anywhere you want to go—
My boat is safer far than yours, I know:
And much more pleasant with its sails all spread.
The Swan? We'll take the oars, and let it float

Ashore at leisure. You, Maurine, sit there—
Miss Helen here. Ye gods and little fishes!
I've reached the height of pleasure, and my wishes.
Adieu despondency! farewell to care!"

'T was done so quickly: that was Vivian's way.
He did not wait for either yea or nay.
He gave commands and left you with no choice
But just to do the bidding of his voice.
His rare, kind smile, low tones, and manly face,
Lent to his quick imperiousness a grace
And winning charm, completely stripping it
Of what might otherwise have seemed unfit.
Leaving no trace of tyranny, but just
That nameless force that seemed to say, "You must."
Suiting its pretty title of "The Dawn,"
(So named, he said, that it might rhyme with "Swan,")
Vivian's sail-boat was carpeted with blue,
While all its sails were of a pale rose hue.
The daintiest craft that flirted with the breeze;
A poet's fancy in an hour of ease.

Whatever Vivian had was of the best.
His room was like some Sultan's in the East.
His board was always spread as for a feast,
Whereat, each meal, he was both host and guest.
He would go hungry sooner than he'd dine

At his own table if 't were illy set.
He so loved things artistic in design—
Order and beauty, all about him. Yet
So kind he was, if it befell his lot
To dine within the humble peasant's cot,
He made it seem his native soil to be,
And thus displayed the true gentility.

Under the rosy banners of the "Dawn,"
Around the lake we drifted on, and on.
It was a time for dreams, and not for speech.
And so we floated on in silence, each
Weaving the fancies suiting such a day.
Helen leaned idly o'er the sail-boat's side,
And dipped her rosy fingers in the tide;
And I among the cushions half reclined,
Half sat, and watched the fleecy clouds at play,
While Vivian with his blank-book, opposite,
In which he seemed to either sketch or write,
Was lost in inspiration of some kind.

No time, no change, no scene, can e'er efface
My mind's impression of that hour and place:
It stands out like a picture. O'er the years,
Black with their robes of sorrow—veiled with tears,
Lying with all their lengthened shapes between,
Untouched, undimmed, I still behold that scene.
Just as the last of Indian-summer days,

Replete with sunlight, crowned with amber haze,
Followed by dark and desolate December,
Through all the months of winter we remember.

The sun slipped westward. That peculiar change
Which creeps into the air, and speaks of night
While yet the day is full of golden light,
We felt steal o'er us.

Vivian broke the spell
Of dream-fraught silence, throwing down his book:
"Young ladies, please allow me to arrange
These wraps about your shoulders. I know well
The fickle nature of our atmosphere,—
Her smile swift followed by a frown or tear,—
And go prepared for changes. Now you look,
Like—like—oh, where's a pretty simile?
Had you a pocket mirror here you'd see
How well my native talent is displayed
In shawling you. Red on the brunette maid;
Blue on the blonde—and quite without design.
(Oh, where *is* that comparison of mine?)
Well—like a June rose and a violet blue
In one bouquet! I fancy that will do.
And now I crave your patience and a boon!
Which is to listen, while I read my rhyme,
A floating fancy of the summer time.
'T is neither witty, wonderful, nor wise,

"If that one ship came back to me."

So listen kindly—but don't criticise
My maiden effort of the afternoon:

"If all the ships I have at sea
Should come a-sailing home to me,
Ah, well! the harbor could not hold
So many sails as there would be
If all my ships came in from sea.

"If half my ships came home from sea,
And brought their precious freight to me,
Ah, well! I should have wealth as great
As any king who sits in state—
So rich the treasures that would be
In half my ships now out at sea.

"If just one ship I have at sea
Should come a-sailing home to me,
Ah, well! the storm-clouds then might frown:
For if the others all went down
Still rich and proud and glad I'd be,
If that one ship came back to me.

"If that one ship went down at sea,
And all the others came to me,
Weighed down with gems and wealth untold,
With glory, honors, riches, gold,
The poorest soul on earth I'd be
If that one ship came not to me.

"O skies be calm! O winds blow free—
Blow all my ships safe home to me.
But if thou sendest some a-wrack
To never more come sailing back,
Send any—all, that skim the sea,
But bring my love-ship home to me."

Helen was leaning by me, and her head
Rested against my shoulder: as he read,
I stroked her hair, and watched the fleecy skies,
And when he finished, did not turn my eyes.
I felt too happy and too shy to meet
His gaze just then. I said, "'T is very sweet,
And suits the day; does it not Helen, dear?"
But Helen, voiceless, did not seem to hear.
"'T is strange," I added, how you poets sing
So feelingly about the very thing
You care not for! and dress up an ideal
So well, it looks a living, breathing real!
Now, to a listener, your love song seemed
A heart's out-pouring; yet I've heard you say
Almost the opposite; or that you deemed
Position, honor, glory, power, fame,
Gained without loss of conscience or good name,
The things to live for."
"Have you? Well, you may,"
Laughed Vivian, "but 't was years—or months ago!
And Solomon says wise men change, you know!
I now speak truth! if she I hold most dear
Slipped from my life, and no least hope were left,
My heart would find the years more lonely here,
Than if I were of wealth, fame, friends, bereft,
And sent an exile to a foreign land."

"There's where the lilies grow."

His voice was low, and measured: as he spoke,
New, unknown chords of melody awoke
Within my soul. I felt my heart expand
With that sweet fullness born of love. I turned
To hide the blushes on my cheek that burned,
And leaning over Helen, breathed her name.
She lay so motionless I thought she slept:
But, as I spoke, I saw her eyes unclose,
And o'er her face a sudden glory swept,
And a slight tremor thrilled all through her frame.
"Sweet friend," I said, "your face is full of light:
What were the dreams that made your eyes so
bright?"

She only smiled for answer, and arose
From her reclining posture at my side,
Threw back the clust'ring ringlets from her face
With a quick gesture full of easy grace,
And, turning, spoke to Vivian. "Will you guide
The boat up near that little clump of green
Off to the right? There's where the lilies grow.
We quite forget our errand here, Maurine,
And our few moments have grown into hours.
What will Aunt Ruth think of our ling'ring so?
There—that will do—now I can reach the flowers."

"Hark! just hear that!" and Vivian broke forth singing,
"Row, brothers, row." "The six o'clock bell's ringing!
Who ever knew three hours to go so fast
In all the annals of the world, before?
I could have sworn not over one had passed.
Young ladies, I am forced to go ashore!
I thank you for the pleasure you have given;
This afternoon has been a glimpse of heaven.
Good night—sweet dreams! and by your gracious leave,
I'll pay my compliments to-morrow eve."

A smile, a bow, and he had gone his way:
And, in the waning glory of the day,
Down cool, green lanes, and through the length'ning shadows,
Silent, we wandered back across the meadows.
The wreath was finished, and adorned my room;
Long afterward, the lilies' copied bloom
Was like a horrid specter in my sight,
Staring upon me morning, noon and night.

The sun went down. The sad new moon rose up,
And passed before me, like an empty cup,
The Great Unseen brims full of pain or bliss,
And gives His children, saying, "Drink of this."

"I turned and looked up at the slim young moon."

MAURINE.

A light wind, from the open casement, fanned
My brow and Helen's, as we, hand in hand,
Sat looking out upon the twilight scene,
In dreamy silence. Helen's dark blue eyes,
Like two lost stars that wandered from the skies
Some night adown the meteor's shining track,
And always had been grieving to go back,
Now gazed up, wistfully, at heaven's dome,
And seemed to recognize and long for home.
Her sweet voice broke the silence: "Wish, Maurine
Before you speak! you know the moon is new,
And anything you wish for will come true
Before it wanes. I do believe the sign!
Now tell me your wish, and I'll tell you mine."

I turned and looked up at the slim young moon,
And, with an almost superstitious heart,
I sighed, "Oh, new moon! help me, by thine art,
To grow all grace and goodness, and to be
Worthy the love a true heart proffers me."
Then smiling down, I said, "Dear one! my boon,
I fear, is quite too silly or too sweet
For my repeating: so we'll let it stay
Between the moon and me. But if I may
I'll listen now to your wish. Tell me, please!"

All suddenly she nestled at my feet,
And hid her blushing face upon my knees.
Then drew my hand against her glowing cheek,
And, leaning on my breast began to speak,
Half sighing out the words my tortured ear
Reached down to catch, while striving not to hear.

"Can you not guess who 't was about, Maurine?
Oh, my sweet friend! you must ere this have seen
The love I tried to cover from all eyes
And from myself. Ah, foolish little heart!
As well it might go seeking for some art
Whereby to hide the sun in noonday skies.

When first the strange sound of his voice I heard,
Looked on his noble face, and touched his hand,
My slumb'ring heart thrilled through and through. and stirred
As if to say, 'I hear and understand.'
And day by day mine eyes were blest beholding
The inner beauty of his life, unfolding
In countless words and actions, that portrayed
The noble stuff of which his soul was made.
And more and more I felt my heart upreaching
Toward the truth, drawn gently by his teaching,
As flowers are drawn by sunlight. And there grew
A strange, shy something in its depths, I knew

"She nestled at my feet."

At length was love, because it was so sad,
And yet so sweet, and made my heart so glad,
Yet seemed to pain me. Then, for very shame,
Lest all should read my secret and its name,
I strove to hide it in my breast away,
Where God could see it only. But each day
It seemed to grow within me, and would rise,
Like my own soul, and look forth from my eyes,
Defying bonds of silence; and would speak,

In its red-lettered language, on my cheek,
If but his name was uttered. You were kind,
My own Maurine! as you alone could be,
So long the sharer of my heart and mind,
While yet you saw, in seeming not to see.
In all the years we have been friends, my own,
And loved as women very rarely do,
My heart no sorrow and no joy has known
It has not shared at once, in full, with you.
And I so longed to speak to you of this,
When first I felt its mingled pain and bliss;
Yet dared not, lest you, knowing him, should say,
In pity for my folly—'Lack-a-day!
You are undone: because no mortal art
Can win the love of such a lofty heart.'
And so I waited, silent and in pain,
Till I could know I did not love in vain.
And now I know, beyond a doubt or fear.
Did he not say, 'If she I hold most dear
Slipped from my life, and no least hope were left,
My heart would find the years more lonely here
Than if I were of wealth, fame, friends, bereft,
And sent, an exile, to a foreign land'?
Oh, darling, you must *love*, to understand
The joy that thrilled all through me at those words.
If was as if a thousand singing birds
Within my heart broke forth in notes of praise.

I did not look up, but I knew his gaze
Was on my face, and that his eyes must see
The joy I felt almost transfigured me.
He loves me—loves me! so the birds kept singing,
And all my soul with that sweet strain is ringing.
If there were added but one drop of bliss,
No more my cup would hold; and so, this eve,
I made a wish that I might feel his kiss
Upon my lips, ere yon pale moon should leave
The stars all lonely, having waned away,
Too old and weak and bowed with care to stay."

Her voice sighed into silence. While she spoke
My heart writhed in me, praying she would cease—
Each word she uttered falling like a stroke
On my bare soul. And now a hush like death,
Save that 't was broken by a quick-drawn breath,
Fell 'round me, but brought not the hoped-for peace.
For when the lash no longer leaves its blows,
The flesh still quivers, and the blood still flows.

She nestled on my bosom like a child,
And 'neath her head my tortured heart throbbed wild
With pain and pity. She had told her tale—
Her self-deceiving story to the end.

How could I look down on her as she lay
So fair, and sweet, and lily-like, and frail—
A tender blossom on my breast, and say,
"Nay, you are wrong—you do mistake, dear friend!
'T is I am loved, not you"? Yet that were truth,
And she must know it later.
Should I speak,
And spread a ghastly pallor o'er the cheek
Flushed now with joy?—And while I, doubting,
pondered,
She spoke again. "Maurine! I oft have wondered
Why you and Vivian were not lovers. He
Is all a heart could ask its king to be;
And you have beauty, intellect and youth.
I think it strange you have not loved each other-
Strange how he could pass by you for another
Not half so fair or worthy. Yet I know
A loving Father pre-arranged it so.
I think my heart has known him all these years,
And waited for him. And if when he came
It had been as a lover of my friend,
I should have recognized him, all the same,
As my soul mate, and loved him to the end,
Hiding my grief, and forcing back my tears
Till on my heart, slow dropping day by day,
Unseen they fell, and wore it all away.
And so a tender Father kept him free,

"The moon went down."

With all the largeness of his love, for me—
For me, unworthy such a precious gift!
Yet I will bend each effort of my life
To grow in grace and goodness, and to lift
My soul and spirit to his lofty height,
So to deserve that holy name, his wife.
Sweet friend, it fills my whole heart with delight

To breathe its long hid secret in your ear.
Speak, my Maurine, and say you love to hear!"

The while she spoke, my active brain gave rise
To one great thought of mighty sacrifice
And self-denial. Oh! it blanched my cheek,
And wrung my soul; and from my heart it drove
All life and feeling. Coward-like, I strove
To send it from me: but I felt it cling
And hold fast on my mind like some live thing;
And all the Self within me felt its touch
And cried, "No, no! I cannot do so much—
I am not strong enough—there is no call."
And then the voice of Helen bade me speak,
And with a calmness born of nerve, I said,
Scarce knowing what I uttered, "Sweetheart, all
Your joys and sorrows are with mine own wed.
I thank you for your confidence and pray
I may deserve it always. But, dear one,
Something – perhaps our boat-ride in the sun,
Has set my head to aching. I must go
To bed directly; and you will, I know,
Grant me your pardon, and another day
We'll talk of this together. Now good night
And angels guard you with their wings of light."

I kissed her lips, and held her on my heart,
And viewed her as I ne'er had done before.

"The storm had come upon me."

I gazed upon her features o'er and o'er;
Marked her white, tender face—her fragile form,
Like some frail plant that withers in the storm;
Saw she was fairer in her new-found joy
Than e'er before; and thought, "Can I destroy
God's handiwork, or leave it at the best
A broken harp, while I close clasp my bliss?"
I bent my head and gave her one last kiss,
And sought my room, and found there such relief
As sad hearts feel when first alone with grief.

The moon went down, slow sailing from my sight,
And left the stars to watch away the night.
O stars, sweet stars, so changeless and serene!
What depths of woe your pitying eyes have seen!
The proud sun sets, and leaves us with our sorrow,
To grope alone in darkness till the morrow.
The languid moon, e'en if she deigns to rise,
Soon seeks her couch, grown weary of our sighs;
But from the early gloaming till the day
Sends golden-liveried heralds forth to say
He comes in might; the patient stars shine on,
Steadfast and faithful, from twilight to dawn.
And, as they shone upon Gethsemane,
And watched the struggle of a God-like soul,
Now from the same far height they shone on me,
And saw the waves of anguish o'er me roll.

The storm had come upon me all unseen:
No sound of thunder fell upon my ear;
No cloud arose to tell me it was near;
But under skies all sunlit, and serene,
I floated with the current of the stream,
And thought life all one golden-haloed dream.
When lo! a hurricane, with awful force,
Swept swift upon its devastating course,
Wrecked my frail bark, and cast me on the wave
Where all my hopes had found a sudden grave.
Love makes us blind and selfish: otherwise
I had seen Helen's secret in her eyes;
So used I was to reading every look
In her sweet face, as I would read a book.
But now, made sightless by love's blinding rays,
I had gone on unseeing, to the end
Where Pain dispelled the mist of golden haze
That walled me in, and lo! I found my friend
Who journeyed with me—at my very side,
Had been sore wounded to the heart, while I
Both deaf and blind, saw not, nor heard her cry.
And then I sobbed, "O God! I would have died
To save her this." And as I cried in pain,
There leaped forth from the still, white realm of Thought
Where Conscience dwells, that unimpassioned spot
As widely different from the heart's domain

As north from south—the impulse felt before,
And put away; but now it rose once more,
In greater strength and said, "Heart, would'st thou
prove
What lips have uttered? Then go lay thy love
On Friendship's altar, as thy offering."
"Nay!" cried my heart, "ask any other thing—
Ask life itself—'t were easier sacrifice.
But ask not love, for that I cannot give."

"But," spoke the voice, "the meanest insect dies,
And is no hero! heroes dare to live
When all that makes life sweet is snatched away."
So with my heart, in converse, till the day,
In gold and crimson billows, rose and broke,
The voice of Conscience, all unwearied, spoke.
Love warred with Friendship: heart with Conscience
fought,
Hours rolled away, and yet the end was not.

And wily Self, tricked out like tenderness,
Sighed, "Think how one, whose life thou wert to
bless,
Will be cast down, and grope in doubt and fear!
Wouldst thou wound him, to give thy friend relief?
Can wrong make right?"
"Nay!" Conscience said, "but Pride
And Time can heal the saddest hurts of Love.

While Friendship's wounds gape wide and yet more
wide,
And bitter fountains of the spirit prove."
At length, exhausted with the wearing strife,
I cast the new-found burden of my life
On God's broad breast, and sought that deep repose
That only he who watched with sorrow knows.

On God's broad breast.

"With it came smiles to nature's face."

PART IV.

MAURINE, Maurine! 't is ten o'clock! arise,
My pretty sluggard! open those dark eyes,
And see where yonder sun is! Do you know
I made my toilet just four hours ago?"

'T was Helen's voice: and Helen's gentle kiss
Fell on my cheek. As from a deep abyss,
I drew my weary self from that strange sleep
That rests not nor refreshes. Scarce awake
Or conscious, yet there seemed a heavy weight

Bound on my breast, as by a cruel Fate.
I knew not why, and yet I longed to weep.
Some dark cloud seemed to hang upon the day;
And, for a moment, in that trance I lay,
When suddenly the truth did o'er me break,
Like some great wave upon a helpless child.
The dull pain in my breast grew like a knife—
The heavy throbbing of my heart grew wild,
And God gave back the burden of the life
He kept what time I slumbered.

"You are ill?"
Cried Helen, "with that blinding headache still!
You look so pale and weary. Now let me
Play nurse, Maurine, and care for you to-day!
And first I'll suit some dainty to your taste,
And bring it to you, with a cup of tea."
And off she ran, not waiting my reply.
But, wanting most the sunshine and the light,
I left my couch and clothed myself in haste,
And kneeling, sent to God an earnest cry
For help and guidance.
"Show Thou me the way,
Where duty leads; for I am blind! my sight
Obscured by self. Oh, lead my steps aright!
Help me see the path: and if it may,
Let this cup pass—and yet Thou heavenly One

"So Roy was coming."

Thy will in all things, not mine own, be done."
Rising, I went upon my way, receiving
The strength prayer gives alway to hearts believing.
I felt that unseen hands were leading me,
And knew the end was peace.

"What! are you up?"
Cried Helen, coming with a tray, and cup,
Of tender toast, and fragrant smoking tea.
"You naughty girl! you should have stayed in bed
Until you ate your breakfast, and were better!
I've something hidden for you here—a letter.
But drink your tea before you read it, dear!
'Tis from some distant cousin, Auntie said,
And so you need not hurry. Now be good,
And mind your Helen."
So, in passive mood,
I laid the still unopened letter near,
And loitered at my breakfast more to please
My nurse, than any hunger to appease.
Then listlessly I broke the seal and read
The few lines written in a bold free hand:

"New London, Canada. Dear Coz. Maurine!
(In spite of generations stretched between
Our natural right to that most handy claim
Of cousinship, we'll use it all the same)

I'm coming to see you! honestly, in truth!
I've threatened often—now I mean to act.
You'll find my coming is a stubborn fact.
Keep quiet, though, and do not tell Aunt Ruth.
I wonder if she'll know her petted boy
In spite of changes. Look for me until
You see me coming. As of old I'm still
Your faithful friend, and loving cousin, Roy."

So Roy was coming! He and I had played
As boy and girl, and later, youth and maid,
Full half our lives together. He had been,
Like me, an orphan; and the roof of kin
Gave both kind shelter. Swift years sped away
Ere change was felt: and then one summer day
A long lost uncle sailed from India's shore—
Made Roy his heir, and he was ours no more.

"He'd write us daily, and we'd see his face
Once every year." Such was his promise given
The morn he left. But now the years were seven
Since last he looked upon the olden place.
He'd been through college, traveled in all lands,
Sailed over seas, and trod the desert sands.
Would write and plan a visit, then, ere long,
Would write again from Egypt or Hong Kong—
Some fancy called him thither unforeseen.

"Bleak winds that blow from Arctic lands."

So years had passed, till seven lay between
His going and the coming of this note,
Which I hid in my bosom, and replied
To Aunt Ruth's queries, "What the truant wrote?"
By saying he was still upon the wing,
And merely dropped a line, while journeying,
To say he lived: and she was satisfied.

Sometimes it happens, in this world so strange,
A human heart will pass through mortal strife,
And writhe in torture: while the old sweet life
So full of hope, and beauty, bloom and grace,
Is slowly strangled by remorseless Pain:
And one stern, cold, relentless, takes its place—
A ghastly, pallid specter of the slain.
Yet those in daily converse see no change
Nor dreamed the heart has suffered.
So that day
I passed along toward the troubled way
Stern duty pointed, and no mortal guessed
A mighty conflict had disturbed my breast.

I had resolved to yield up to my friend
The man I loved. Since she, too, loved him so
I saw no other way in honor left.
She was so weak and fragile, once bereft
Of this great hope, that held her with such power,

"All sad with lonely wind and rain."

She would wilt down, like some frost-bitten flower,
And swift untimely death would be the end.
But I was strong: and hardy plants, which grow
In out-door soil, can bear bleak winds that blow
From Arctic lands, whereof a single breath
Would lay the hot-house blossom low in death.

The hours went by, too slow, and yet too fast.
All day I argued with my foolish heart
That bade me play the shrinking coward's part
And hide from pain. And when the day had past

And time for Vivian's call drew near and nearer,
It pleaded, "Wait, until the way seems clearer:
Say you are ill—or busy: keep away
Until you gather strength enough to play
The part you have resolved on."

"Nay, not so,"
Made answer clear-eyed Reason, "Do you go
And put your resolution to the test.
Resolve, however nobly formed, at best
Is but a still-born babe of Thought, until
It proves existence of its life and will
By sound or action."

So when Helen came
And knelt by me, her fair face all aflame
With sudden blushes, whispering, "My sweet!
My heart can hear the music of his feet—
Go down with me to meet him," I arose,
And went with her all calmly, as one goes
To look upon the dear face of the dead.

That eve, I know not what I did or said.
I was not cold—my manner was not strange:
Perchance I talked more freely than my wont,
But in my speech was naught could give affront;
Yet I conveyed, as only woman can,
That nameless *something*, which bespeaks a change.

'T is in the power of woman, if she be
Whole-souled and noble, free from coquetry—
Her motives all unselfish, worthy, good,
To make herself and feelings understood
By nameless acts—thus sparing what to man,
However gently answered, causes pain,
The offering of his hand and heart in vain.

She can be friendly, unrestrained, and kind,
Assume no airs of pride or arrogance;
But in her voice, her manner, and her glance,
Convey that mystic something, undefined,
Which men fail not to understand and read,
And, when not blind with egoism, heed.
My task was harder. 'T was the slow undoing
Of long sweet months of unimpeded wooing.
It was to hide and cover and conceal
The truth—assuming, what I did not feel.
It was to dam love's happy singing tide
That blessed me with its hopeful, tuneful tone,
By feigned indiff'rence, till it turned aside,
And changed its channel, leaving me alone
To walk parched plains, and thirst for that sweet
draught
My lips had tasted, but another quaffed.

It could be done. For no words yet were spoken—
None to recall—no pledges to be broken.

"Stay! one moment, Vivian."

"He will be grieved, then angry, cold, then cross,"
I reasoned, thinking what would be his part
In this strange drama. "Then, because his heart
Feels something lacking, to make good his loss,
He'll turn to Helen: and her gentle grace
And loving acts will win her soon the place
I hold to-day: and like a troubled dream
At length, our past, when he looks back, will
seem."

That evening passed with music, chat and song:
But hours that once had flown on airy wings

Now limped on weary, aching limbs along,
Each moment like some dreaded step that brings
A twinge of pain.
As Vivian rose to go,
Slow bending to me, from his greater height,
He took my hand, and, looking in my eyes,
With tender questioning and pained surprise,
Said, "Maurine, you are not yourself to-night!
What is it? Are you ailing?"

"Ailing? no,"
I answered, laughing lightly, "I am not:
Just see my cheek, sir! is it thin, or pale?
Now tell me, am I looking very frail?"
"Nay, nay!" he answered, "it can not be *seen*,
The change I speak of—'t was more in your mien:
Preoccupation, or—I know not what!
Miss Helen, am I wrong, or does Maurine
Seem to have something on her mind this eve?"

"She does!" laughed Helen, "and I do believe
I know what 't is! A letter came to-day
Which she read slyly, and then hid away
Close to her heart, not knowing I was near:
And since she's been as you have seen her here.
See how she blushes! so my random shot
We must believe has struck a tender spot."

Her rippling laughter floated through the room,
And redder yet I felt the hot blood rise,
Then surge away to leave me pale as death,
Under the dark and swiftly gathering gloom
Of Vivian's questioning, accusing eyes,
That searched my soul. I almost shrieked beneath
That stern, fixed gaze; and stood spell-bound until
He turned with sudden movement, gave his hand
To each in turn, and said, "You must not stand
Longer, young ladies, in this open door.
The air is heavy with a cold damp chill.
We shall have rain to-morrow, or before.
Good night."
He vanished in the darkling shade;
And so the dreaded evening found an end,
That saw me grasp the conscience-whetted blade,
And strike a blow for honor and for friend.

"How swiftly passed the evening!" Helen sighed.
"How long the hours!" my tortured heart replied.
Joy, like a child, with lightsome steps doth glide
By Father Time, and, looking in his face,
Cries, snatching blossoms from the fair road-side,
"I could pluck more, but for thy hurried pace."
The while her elder brother Pain, man grown,
Whose feet are hurt by many a thorn and stone,
Looks to some distant hill-top, high and calm,

Where he shall find not only rest, but balm
For all his wounds, and cries in tones of woe,
"O Father Time! why is thy pace so slow?"

Two days, all sad with lonely wind and rain,
Went sobbing by, repeating o'er and o'er
The miserere, desolate and drear,
Which every human heart must sometime hear.
Pain is but little varied. Its refrain,
Whate'er the words are, is for aye the same.
The third day brought a change: for with it came
Not only sunny smiles to Nature's face,
But Roy, our Roy came back to us. Once more
We looked into his laughing, handsome eyes,
Which, while they gave Aunt Ruth a glad surprise
In no way puzzled her: for one glance told
What each succeeding one confirmed, that he
Who bent above her with the lissome grace
Of his fine form, though grown so tall, could be
No other than the Roy Montaine of old.

It was a sweet reunion: and he brought
So much of sunshine with him, that I caught,
Just from his smile alone, enough of gladness
To make my heart forget a time its sadness.
We talked together of the dear old days:
Leaving the present, with its depths and heights

"The harvest moon."

Of life's maturer sorrows and delights
I turned back to my childhood's level land,
And Roy and I, dear playmates, hand in hand,
Wandered in mem'ry, through the olden ways.

It was the second evening of his coming.
Helen was playing dreamily, and humming
Some wordless melody of white-souled thought,
While Roy and I sat by the open door,
Re-living childish incidents of yore.
My eyes were glowing, and my cheeks were hot
With warm young blood; excitement, joy, or pain
Alike would send swift coursing through each vein.
Roy, always eloquent, was waxing fine,

And bringing vividly before my gaze
Some old adventure of those halcyon days,
When suddenly in pauses of the talk,
I heard a well-known step upon the walk,
And looked up quickly to meet full in mine
The eyes of Vivian Dangerfield. A flash
Shot from their depths:—a sudden blaze of light
Like that swift followed by the thunder's crash,
Which said, "Suspicion is confirmed by sight;"
As they fell on the pleasant door-way scene.
Then o'er his clear-cut face, a cold white look
Crept, like the pallid moonlight o'er a brook,
And, with a slight, proud bending of the head,
He stepped toward us haughtily and said,
"Please pardon my intrusion, Miss Maurine:
I called to ask Miss Trevor for a book
She spoke of lending me: nay, sit you still!
And I, by grant of your permission, will
Pass by to where I hear her playing."
"Stay!"
I said, "one moment, Vivian, if you please;"
And suddenly bereft of all my ease,
And scarcely knowing what to do or say,
Confused as any school-girl, I arose,
And some way made each to the other known.
They bowed, shook hands: then Vivian turned away
And sought out Helen, leaving us alone.

"Golden weather."

"One of Miss Trevor's, or of Maurine's beaux?
Which may he be, who cometh like a prince
With haughty bearing, and an eagle eye?"
Roy queried, laughing: and I answered, "Since
You saw him pass me for Miss Trevor's side,
I leave your own good judgment to reply."

And straightway caused the tide of talk to glide
In other channels, striving to dispel
The sudden gloom that o'er my spirit fell.

We mortals are such hypocrites at best!
When Conscience tries our courage with a test,
And points to some steep pathway, we set out
Boldly, denying any fear or doubt;
But pause before the first rock in the way,
And, looking back, with tears, at Conscience, say
"We are so sad, dear Conscience! for we would
Most gladly do what to thee seemeth good;
But lo! this rock! we cannot climb it, so
Thou must point out some other way to go."
Yet secretly we are rejoicing: and,
When right before our faces, as we stand
In seeming grief, the rock is cleft in twain,
Leaving the pathway clear, we shrink in pain!
And loth to go, by every act reveal
What we so tried from Conscience to conceal.

I saw that hour, the way made plain, to do
With scarce an effort, what had seemed a strife
That would require the strength of my whole life.

Women have quick perceptions: and I knew
That Vivian's heart was full of jealous pain,
Suspecting—nay *believing* Roy Montaine
To be my lover. First my altered mien—
And next the letter—then the door-way scene—
My flushed face gazing in the one above
That bent so near me, and my strange confusion
When Vivian came, all led to one conclusion:
That I had but been playing with his love,
As women sometimes cruelly do play
With hearts when their true lovers are away.

There could be nothing easier, than just
To let him linger on in this belief
Till hourly-fed Suspicion and Distrust
Should turn to scorn and anger all his grief.
Compared with me, so doubly sweet and pure
Would Helen seem, my purpose would be sure,
And certain of completion in the end.
But now, the way was made so straight and clear,
My coward heart shrank back in guilty fear,
Till Conscience whispered with her "still small
voice,"

"Some steep mountain."

"The precious time is passing—make thy choice—
Resign thy love, or slay thy trusting friend."

The growing moon, watched by the myriad eyes
Of countless stars, went sailing through the skies,
Like some young prince, rising to rule a nation,
To whom all eyes are turned in expectation.
A woman who possesses tact and art
And strength of will can take the hand of doom,

And walk on, smiling sweetly as she goes,
With rosy lips, and rounded cheeks of bloom,
Cheating a loud-tongued world that never knows
The pain and sorrow of her hidden heart.
And so I joined in Roy's bright changing chat;
Answered his sallies—talked of this and that,
My brow unruffled as the calm still wave
That tells not of the wrecked ship, and the grave
Beneath its surface.

Then we heard, ere long,
The sound of Helen's gentle voice in song,
And, rising, entered where the subtle power
Of Vivian's eyes, forgiving while accusing,
Finding me weak, had won me, in that hour;
But Roy, alway polite and debonair
Where ladies were, now hung about my chair
With nameless delicate attentions, using
That air devotional, and those small arts
Acquaintance with society imparts
To men gallant by nature.

'T was my sex
And not myself he bowed to. Had my place
Been filled that evening by a dowager,
Twice his own age, he would have given her
The same attentions. But they served to vex

Whatever hope in Vivian's heart remained.
The cold, white look crept back upon his face,
Which told how deeply he was hurt and pained.

Little by little all things had conspired,
To bring events I dreaded, yet desired.
We were in constant intercourse: walks, rides,
Picnics and sails, filled weeks of golden weather,
And almost hourly we were thrown together.
No words were spoken of rebuke or scorn:
Good friends we seemed. But as a gulf divides
This land and that, though lying side by side,
So rolled a gulf between us—deep and wide—
The gulf of doubt, which widened slowly morn
And noon and night.
Free and informal were
These picnics and excursions. Yet, although
Helen and I would sometimes choose to go
Without our escorts, leaving them quite free,
It happened alway Roy would seek out me
Ere passed the day, while Vivian walked with her.
I had no thought of flirting. Roy was just
Like some dear brother, and I quite forgot
The kinship was so distant it was not
Safe to rely upon in perfect trust,
Without reserve or caution. Many a time
When there was some steep mountain side to climb,

And I grew weary, he would say, "Maurine,
Come rest you here." And I would go and lean
My head upon his shoulder, or would stand
And let him hold in his my willing hand,
The while he stroked it gently with his own.
Or I would let him clasp me with his arm,
Nor entertained a thought of any harm,
Nor once supposed but Vivian was alone
In his suspicions. But ere long the truth
I learned in consternation! both Aunt Ruth
And Helen, honestly, in faith believed
That Roy and I were lovers.

Undeceived,
Some careless words might open Vivian's eyes
And spoil my plans. So, reasoning in this wise,
To all their sallies I in jest replied,
To naught assented, and yet naught denied,
With Roy unchanged remaining, confident
Each understood just what the other meant.

If I grew weary of this double part,
And self-imposed deception caused my heart
Sometimes to shrink, I needed but to gaze
On Helen's face: that wore a look ethereal,
As if she dwelt above the things material

"The sunshine of an April day."

And held communion with the angels. So
I fed my strength and courage through the days.

What time the harvest moon rose full and clear
And cast its ling'ring radiance on the earth,
We made a feast; and called from far and near,
Our friends, who came to share the scene of mirth.
Fair forms and faces flitted to and fro;
But none more sweet than Helen's. Robed in white,
She floated like a vision through the dance.
So frailly fragile and so phantom fair,
She seemed like some stray spirit of the air,
And was pursued by many an anxious glance
That looked to see her fading from the sight
Like figures that a dreamer sees at night.

And noble men and gallants graced the scene:
Yet none more noble or more grand of mien
Than Vivian—broad of chest and shoulder, tall
And finely formed, as any Grecian god
Whose high-arched foot on Mount Olympus trod.
His clear-cut face was beardless; and, like those
Same Grecian statues, when in calm repose,
Was it in hue and feature. Framed in hair
Dark and abundant; lighted by large eyes
That could be cold as steel in winter air,
Or warm and sunny as Italian skies.

Weary of mirth and music, and the sound
Of tripping feet, I sought a moment's rest
Within the lib'ry, where a group I found
Of guests, discussing with apparent zest
Some theme of interest—Vivian, near the while,
Leaning and listening with his slow odd smile.

"Now, Miss La Pelle, we will appeal to you,"
Cried young Guy Semple, as I entered. "We
Have been discussing right before his face,
All unrebuked by him, as you may see,
A poem lately published by our friend:
And we are quite divided. I contend
The poem is a libel and untrue.
I hold the fickle women are but few,
Compared with those who are like yon fair moon
That, ever faithful, rises in her place
Whether she's greeted by the flowers of June,
Or cold and dreary stretches of white space."

"Oh!" cried another, "Mr. Dangerfield,
Look to your laurels! or you needs must yield
The crown to Semple, who, 't is very plain,
Has mounted Pegasus and grasped his mane."

All laughed: and then, as Guy appealed to me
I answered lightly, "My young friend, I fear
You chose a most unlucky simile

To prove the truth of woman. To her place
The moon does rise—but with a different face
Each time she comes. But now I needs must hear
The poem read, before I can consent
To pass my judgment on the sentiment."

All clamored that the author was the man
To read the poem: and with tones that said
More than the cutting, scornful words he read;
Taking the book Guy gave him, he began:

HER LOVE.

The sands upon the ocean side
That change about with every tide,
And never true to one abide,
A woman's love I liken to.

The summer zephyrs, light and vain,
That sing the same alluring strain
To every grass blade on the plain—
A woman's love is nothing more.

The sunshine of an April day
That comes to warm you with its ray,
But while you smile has flown away—
A woman's love is like to this.

MAURINE.

God made poor woman with no heart,
But gave her skill, and tact, and art,
And so she lives, and plays her part.
We must not blame, but pity her.

She leans to man—but just to hear
The praise he whispers in her ear,
Herself, not him, she holdetn dear—
O fool! to be deceived by her.

To sate her selfish thirst she quaffs
The love of strong hearts in sweet draughts
Then throws them lightly by and laughs,
Too weak to understand their pain.

As changeful as the winds that blow
From every region, to and fro,
Devoid of heart, she cannot know
The suffering of a human heart.

I knew the cold, fixed gaze of Vivian's eyes
Saw the slow color to my forehead rise;
But lightly answered, toying with my fan,
"That sentiment is very like a man!
Men call us fickle, but they do us wrong;
We're only frail and helpless, men are strong;
And when love dies, they take the poor dead thing
And make a shroud out of their suffering,
And drag the corpse about with them for years.

But we?—we mourn it for a day with tears!
And then we robe it for its last long rest,
And being women, feeble things at best,
We cannot dig the grave ourselves. And so
We call strong-limbed New Love to lay it low:
Immortal sexton he! whom Venus sends
To do this service for her earthly friends.
The trusty fellow digs the grave so deep
Nothing disturbs the dead laid there to sleep."

The laugh that followed had not died away
Ere Roy Montaine came seeking me, to say
The band was tuning for our waltz, and so
Back to the ball-room bore me. In the glow
And heat and whirl, my strength ere long was spent,
And I grew faint and dizzy, and we went
Out on the cool moonlighted portico,
And, sitting there, Roy drew my languid head
Upon the shelter of his breast, and bent
His smiling eyes upon me, as he said,
"I'll try the mesmerism of my touch
To work a cure: be very quiet now,
And let me make some passes o'er your brow.
Why, how it throbs! you've exercised too much!
I shall not let you dance again to-night."

Just then before us, in the broad moonlight,
Two forms were mirrored: and I turned my face

To catch the teasing and mischievous glance
Of Helen's eyes, as, heated by the dance,
Leaning on Vivian's arm, she sought this place.

"I beg your pardon," came in that round tone
Of his low voice. "I think we do intrude."
Bowing, they turned and left us quite alone
Ere I could speak, or change my attitude.

"The roof of kin."

"A cave some miles away."

PART V.

A VISIT to a cave some miles away
Was next in order. So, one sunny day,
Four prancing steeds conveyed a laughing load
Of merry pleasure-seekers o'er the road.
A basket picnic, music and croquet

Were in the programme. Skies were blue and
clear,
And cool winds whispered of the Autumn near.
The merry-makers filled the time with pleasure;
Some floated to the music's rhythmic measure,
Some played, some promenaded on the green.

Ticked off by happy hearts, the moments passed.
The afternoon, all aglow and glimmer, came.
Helen and Roy were leaders of some game,
And Vivian was not visible. . . .
"Maurine,
I challenge you to climb yon cliff with me!
And who shall tire, or reach the summit last
Must pay a forfeit," cried a romping maid.
"Come! start at once, or own you are afraid."
So challenged I made ready for the race,
Decided first the forfeit was to be
A handsome pair of bootees to replace
The victor's loss who made the rough ascent.
The cliff was steep and stony. On we went
As eagerly as if the path was Fame,
And what we climbed for, glory and a name.

My hands were bruised; my garments sadly rent,
But on I clambered. Soon I heard a cry,
"Maurine! Maurine! my strength is wholly spent!

You've won the boots! I'm going back—good-by!"
And back she turned, in spite of laugh and jeer.

I reached the summit: and its solitude,
Wherein no living creature did intrude,
Save some sad birds that wheeled and circled near,
I found far sweeter than the scene below.
Alone with One who knew my hidden woe,
I did not feel so much alone as when
I mixed with th' unthinking throngs of men.

Some flowers that decked the barren, sterile place
I plucked, and read the lesson they conveyed,
That in our lives, albeit dark with shade
And rough and hard with labor, yet may grow
The flowers of Patience, Sympathy, and Grace.

As I walked on in meditative thought,
A serpent writhed across my pathway; not
A large or deadly serpent; yet the sight
Filled me with ghastly terror and affright.
I shrieked aloud: a darkness veiled my eyes—
And I fell fainting 'neath the watchful skies.

I was no coward. Country-bred and born,
I had no feeling but the keenest scorn
For those fine lady "ah's" and "oh's" of fear

So much assumed (when any man is near).
But God implanted in each human heart
A natural horror, and a sickly dread
Of that accursed, slimy, creeping thing
That squirms a limbless carcass o'er the ground.
And where that inborn loathing is not found
You'll find the serpent qualities instead.
Who fears it not, himself is next of kin,
And in his bosom holds some treacherous art
Whereby to counteract its venomed sting.
And all are sired by Satan—Chief of Sin.

Who loathes not that foul creature of the dust,
However fair in seeming, I distrust.

I woke from my unconsciousness, to know
I leaned upon a broad and manly breast,
And Vivian's voice was speaking, soft and low,
Sweet whispered words of passion, o'er and o'er.
I dared not breathe. Had I found Eden's shore?
Was this a foretaste of eternal bliss?
"My love," he sighed, his voice like winds that moan
Before a rain in Summer time, "My own,
For one sweet stolen moment, lie and rest
Upon this heart that loves and hates you both!
O fair false face! Why were you made so fair!

"Sweet whispered words of passion."

O mouth of Southern sweetness! that ripe kiss
That hangs upon you, I do take an oath
His lips shall never gather. There!—and there!
I steal it from him. Are you his—all his?

Nay, you are mine, this moment, as I dreamed—
Blind fool—believing you were what you seemed—
You would be mine in all the years to come.
Fair fiend! I love and hate you in a breath
O God! if this white pallor were but *death*,
And I were stretched beside you, cold and dumb,
My arms about you, so—in fond embrace!
My lips pressed, so—upon your dying face!"

"Woman, how dare you bring me to such shame!
How dare you drive me to an act like this,
To steal from your unconscious lips the kiss
You lured me on to think my rightful claim!
O frail and puny woman! could you know
The devil that you waken in the hearts
You snare and bind in your enticing arts,
The thin, pale stuff that in your veins doth flow
Would freeze in terror.
Strange you have such power
To please, or pain us, poor, weak, soulless things—
Devoid of passion as a senseless flower!
Like butterflies, your only boast, your wings.

"We reached the forest."

There, now, I scorn you—scorn you from this hour,
And hate myself for having talked of love!"

He pushed me from him. And I felt as those
Doomed angels must, when pearly gates above
Are closed against them.
With a feigned surprise
I started up and opened wide my eyes,
And looked about. Then in confusion rose
And stood before him.

"Pardon me, I pray!"
He said quite coldly. "Half an hour ago
I left you with the company below,
And sought this cliff. A moment since you cried,

It seemed, in sudden terror and alarm.
I came in time to see you swoon away.
You'll need assistance down the rugged side
Of this steep cliff. I pray you take my arm."

So, formal and constrained, we passed along,
Rejoined our friends, and mingled with the throng
To have no further speech again that day.

Next morn there came a bulky document,
The legal firm of Blank & Blank had sent;
Containing news unlooked for. An estate
Which proved a cozy fortune—no-wise great
Or princely—had in France been left to me,
My grandsire's last descendant. And it brought
A sense of joy and freedom in the thought
Of foreign travel, which I hoped would be
A panacea for my troubled mind,
That longed to leave the olden scenes behind
With all their recollections, and to flee
To some strange country.
I was in such haste
To put between me and my native land
The briny ocean's desolating waste,
I gave Aunt Ruth no peace, until she planned
To sail that week, two months: though she was fain

To wait until the Springtime. Roy Montaine
Would be our guide and escort.

No one dreamed
The cause of my strange hurry, but all seemed
To think good fortune had quite turned my brain.
One bright October morning, when the woods
Had donned their purple mantles and red hoods
In honor of the Frost King, Vivian came,
Bringing some green leaves, tipped with crimson flame,—
First trophies of the Autumn time.
And Roy
Made a proposal that we all should go
And ramble in the forest for a while.
But Helen said she was not well—and so
Must stay at home. Then Vivian, with a smile,
Responded, "I will stay and talk to you,
And they may go;" at which her two cheeks grew
Like twin blush roses;—dyed with love's red wave,
Her fair face shone transfigured with great joy.
And Vivian saw—and suddenly was grave.

Roy took my arm in that protecting way
Peculiar to some men, which seems to say,
"I shield my own," a manner pleasing, e'en
When we are conscious that it does not mean
More than a simple courtesy. A woman

"My friendship melted into love."

Whose heart is wholly feminine and human,
And not unsexed by hobbies, likes to be
The object of that tender chivalry,—
That guardianship which man bestows on her,
Yet mixed with deference; as if she were
Half child, half angel.

Though she may be strong,
Noble and self-reliant, not afraid
To raise her hand and voice against all wrong
And all oppression, yet if she be made,
With all the independence of her thought,
A woman womanly, as God designed,
Albeit she may have as great a mind
As man, her brother, yet his strength of arm,
His muscle and his boldness she has not,
And cannot have without she loses what
Is far more precious, modesty and grace.
So walking on in her appointed place,
She does not strive to ape him, nor pretend
But that she needs him for a guide and friend,
To shield her with his greater strength from harm.

We reached the forest; wandered to and fro
Through many a winding path and dim retreat,
Till I grew weary: when I chose a seat
Upon an oak tree, which had been laid low
By some wind storm, or by some lightning stroke.
And Roy stood just below me, where the ledge
On which I sat sloped steeply to the edge
Of sunny meadows lying at my feet.
One hand held mine; the other grasped a limb
That cast its checkered shadows over him;
And, with his head thrown back, his dark eyes raised

And fixed upon me, silently he gazed
Until I, smiling, turned to him and spoke:
"Give words, my cousin, to those thoughts that rise,
And, like dumb spirits, look forth from your eyes."

The smooth and even darkness of his cheek
Was stained one moment by a flush of red.
He swayed his lithe form nearer as he stood
Still clinging to the branch above his head.
His brilliant eyes grew darker; and he said,
With sudden passion, "Do you bid me speak?
I can not, then, keep silence if I would.
That hateful fortune, coming as it did,
Forbade my speaking sooner; for I knew
A harsh-tongued world would quickly misconstrue
My motive for a meaner one. But, sweet,
So big my heart has grown with love for you
I can not shelter it, or keep it hid.
And so I cast it throbbing at your feet,
For you to guard and cherish, or to break.
Maurine, I love you better than my life.
My friend—my cousin—be still more, my wife!
Maurine, Maurine, what answer do you make?"

I scarce could breathe for wonderment; and numb
With truth that fell too suddenly, sat dumb
With sheer amaze, and stared at Roy with eyes

That looked no feeling but complete surprise.
He swayed so near his breath was on my cheek.
"Maurine, Maurine," he whispered, "will you speak?"

Then suddenly, as o'er some magic glass
One picture in a score of shapes will pass,
I seemed to see Roy glide before my gaze.
First, as the playmate of my earlier days—
Next, as my kin—and then my valued friend,
And last, my lover. As when colors blend
In some unlooked-for group before our eyes,
We hold the glass, and look them o'er and o'er
So now I gazed on Roy in his new guise,
In which he ne'er appeared to me before.

His form was like a panther's in its grace,
So lithe and supple, and of medium height,
And garbed in all the elegance of fashion.
His large black eyes were full of fire and passion,
And in expression fearless, firm, and bright.
His hair was like the very deeps of night,
And hung in raven clusters 'round a face
Of dark and flashing beauty.
He was more
Like some romantic maiden's grand ideal
Than like a common being. As I gazed
Upon the handsome face to mine upraised,

"Like some unearthly creature of a dream."

I saw before me, living, breathing, real,
The hero of my early day-dreams: though
So full my heart was with that clear-cut face,
Which, all unlike, yet claimed the hero's place,
I had not recognized him so before,
Or thought of him, save as a valued friend.
So now I called him, adding,
"Foolish boy!
Each word of love you utter aims a blow
At that sweet trust I had reposed in you.
I was so certain I had found a true,
Steadfast man friend, on whom I could depend,
And go on wholly trusting, to the end.
Why did you shatter my delusion, Roy,
By turning to a lover?"
"Why, indeed!
Because I loved you more than any brother,
Or any friend could love." Then he began
To argue like a lawyer, and to plead
With all his eloquence. And, listening,
I strove to think it was a goodly thing
To be so fondly loved by such a man,
And it were best to give his wooing heed,
And not deny him. Then before my eyes
In all its clear-cut majesty, that other
Haughty and poet-handsome face would rise
And rob my purpose of all life and strength.

Roy urged and argued, as Roy only could,
With that impetuous, boyish eloquence.
He held my hands, and vowed I must, and should
Give some least hope; till, in my own defense,
I turned upon him, and replied at length:
"I thank you for the noble heart you offer:
But it deserves a true one in exchange.
I could love you if I loved not another
Who keeps my heart; so I have none to proffer."

Then, seeing how his dark eyes flashed, I said,
"Dear Roy! I know my words seem very strange;
But I love one I cannot hope to wed.
A river rolls between us, dark and deep.
To cross it—were to stain with blood my hand.
You force my speech on what I fain would keep
In my own bosom, but you understand?
My heart is given to love that's sanctified,
And now can feel no other.
Be you kind,
Dear Roy, my brother! speak of this no more,
Lest pleading and denying should divide
The hearts so long united. Let me find
In you my cousin and my friend of yore.
And now come home. The morning, all too soon
And unperceived, has melted into noon.
Helen will miss us. and we must return."

"Took me gently to his breast."

He took my hand, and helped me to arise,
Smiling upon me with his sad dark eyes,
Where passion's fires had, sudden, ceased to burn.

"And so," he said, "too soon and unforeseen
My friendship melted into love, Maurine.
But, sweet! I am not wholly in the blame,
For what you term my folly. You forgot,
So long we'd known each other, I had not
In truth a brother's or a cousin's claim.
But I remembered, when through every nerve
Your lightest touch went thrilling; and began
To love you with that human love of man
For comely woman. By your coaxing arts,
You won your way into my heart of hearts
And all Platonic feelings put to rout.
A maid should never lay aside reserve
With one who's not her kinsman, out and out.
But as we now, with measured steps, retrace
The path we came, e'en so my heart I'll send,
At your command, back to the olden place,
And strive to love you only as a friend."
I felt the justice of his mild reproof,
But answered laughing, "'T is the same old cry:
'The woman tempted me, and I did eat.'
Since Adam's time we've heard it. But I'll try
And be more prudent, sir, and hold aloof

The fruit I never once had thought so sweet
'T would tempt you any. Now go dress for dinner,
Thou sinned against! as also will the sinner.
And guard each act, that no least look betray
What's passed between us."
Then I turned away
And sought my room, low humming some old air
That ceased upon the threshold; for mine eyes
Fell on a face so glorified and fair
All other senses, merged in that of sight,
Were lost in contemplation of the bright
And wondrous picture, which had otherwise
Made dim my vision.
Waiting in my room,
Her whole face lit as by an inward flame
That shed its halo 'round her, Helen stood;
Her fair hands folded like a lily's leaves
Weighed down by happy dews of summer eves.
Upon her cheek the color went and came
As sunlight flickers o'er a bed of bloom;
And, like some slim young sapling of the wood,
Her slender form leaned slightly; and her hair
Fell 'round her loosely, in long curling strands
All unconfined, and as by loving hands
Tossed into bright confusion.
Standing there,
Her starry eyes uplifted, she did seem

Like some unearthly creature of a dream;
Until she started forward, gliding slowly,
And broke the breathless silence, speaking lowly,
As one grown meek, and humble in an hour,
Bowing before some new and mighty power.

"Maurine, Maurine!" she murmured, and again,
"Maurine, my own sweet friend, Maurine!"
And then,
Laying her love light hands upon my head,
She leaned, and looked into my eyes, and said
With voice that bore her joy in ev'ry tone,
As winds that blow across a garden bed
Are weighed with fragrance, "He is mine alone,
And I am his—all his—his very own.
So pledged this hour, by that most sacred tie
Save one beneath God's over-arching sky.
I could not wait to tell you of my bliss:
I want your blessing, sweetheart! and your kiss."
So hiding my heart's trouble with a smile,
I leaned and kissed her dainty mouth; the while
I felt a guilt-joy, as of some sweet sin,
When my lips fell where his so late had been.

And all day long I bore about with me
A sense of shame—yet mixed with satisfaction,

"The billows of the sea."

As some starved child might steal a loaf, and be
Sad with the guilt resulting from her action,
While yet the morsel in her mouth was sweet.
That ev'ning when the house had settled down
To sleep and quiet, to my room there crept
A lithe young form, robed in long white gown:
With steps like fall of thistle-down she came,
Her mouth smile-wreathed; and, breathing low
my name,
Nestled in graceful beauty at my feet.

"Sweetheart," she murmured softly, "ere I sleep,
I needs must tell you all my tale of joy.
Beginning where you left us—you and Roy.
You saw the color flame upon my cheek
When Vivian spoke of staying. So did he;—
And, when we were alone, he gazed at me
With such a strange look in his wondrous eyes.
The silence deepened; and I tried to speak
Upon some common topic, but could not,
My heart was in such tumult.
In this wise
Five happy moments glided by us, fraught
With hours of feeling. Vivian rose up then,
And came and stood by me, and stroked my hair.
And, in his low voice, o'er and o'er again,
Said, 'Helen, little Helen, frail and fair.'
Then took my face, and turned it to the light,
And looking in my eyes, and seeing what
Was shining from them, murmured, sweet and low,
'Dear eyes, you cannot veil the truth from sight.
You love me, Helen! answer, is it so?'
And I made answer straightway, 'With my life
And soul and strength I love you, O my love!'
He leaned and took me gently to his breast,
And said, 'Here then, this dainty head shall rest
Henceforth forever: O my little dove!
My lily-bud—my fragile blossom-wife!'

"And then I told him all my thoughts; and he
Listened, with kisses for his comments, till
My tale was finished. Then he said, 'I will
Be frank with you, my darling, from the start,
And hide no secret from you in my heart.
I love you, Helen, but you are not first
To rouse that love to being. Ere we met
I loved a woman madly—never dreaming
She was not all in truth she was in seeming.
Enough! she proved to be that thing accursed
Of God and man—a wily vain coquette.
I hate myself for having loved her. Yet
So much my heart spent on her, it must give
A love less ardent, and less prodigal,
Albeit just as tender and as true—
A milder, yet a faithful love to you.
Just as some evil fortune might befall
A man's great riches, causing him to live
In some low cot, all unpretending, still
As much his home—as much his loved retreat,
As was the princely palace on the hill,
E'en so I give you all that's left. my sweet!
Of my heart-fortune.'

That were more to me,'
I made swift smiling answer, 'than to be
The worshiped consort of a king.' And so

"The Autumn day."

Our faith was pledged. But Vivian would not go
Until I vowed to wed him New Year day.
And I am sad because you go away
Before that time. I shall not feel half wed
Without you here. Postpone your trip and stay,
And be my bridesmaid."
"Nay, I cannot, dear!
'T would disarrange our plans for half a year.
I'll be in Europe New Year day," I said,
"And send congratulations by the cable."

And from my soul thanked Providence for sparing
The pain, to me, of sharing in, and wearing
The festal garments of a wedding scene,

While all my heart was hung with sorrow's sable.
Forgetting for a season, that between
The cup and lip lies many a chance of loss,
I lived in my near future, confident
All would be as I planned it; and, across
The briny waste of waters, I should find
Some balm and comfort for my troubled mind.
The sad Fall days, like maidens auburn-tressed
And amber-eyed, in purple garments dressed,
Passed by, and dropped their tears upon the tomb
Of fair Queen, Summer, buried in her bloom.

Roy left us for a time, and Helen went
To make the nuptial preparations. Then,
Aunt Ruth complained one day of feeling ill:
Her veins ran red with fever; and the skill
Of two physicians could not stem the tide.
The house, that rang so late with laugh and jest,
Grew ghostly with low whispered sounds: and when
The Autumn day, that I had thought to be
Bounding upon the billows of the sea,
Came sobbing in, it found me pale and worn,
Striving to keep away that unloved guest
Who comes unbidden, making hearts to mourn.

Through all the anxious weeks I watched beside
The suff'rer's couch, Roy was my help and stay;

"Winter, crisp and chill."

Others were kind, but he alone each day
Brought strength and comfort, by his cheerful face,
And hopeful words, that fell in that sad place
Like rays of light upon a darkened way.
November passed; and Winter, crisp and chill,
In robes of ermine walked on plain and hill.
Returning light and life dispelled the gloom
That Cheated Death had brought us from the tomb.
Aunt Ruth was saved, and slowly getting better—
Was dressed each day, and walked about the room.
Then came one morning in the Eastern mail,
A little white-winged birdling of a letter.
I broke the seal and read,

"Maurine, my own!
I hear Aunt Ruth is better, and am glad.
I felt so sorry for you; and so sad
To think I left you when I did—alone
To bear your pain and worry, and those nights
Of weary, anxious watching.

"Vivian writes
Your plans are changed now, and you will not sail
Before the Springtime. So you'll come and be
My bridesmaid, darling! Do not say me nay.
But three weeks more of girlhood left to me.
Come, if you can, just two weeks from to-day,
And make your preparations here. My sweet!
Indeed I am not glad Aunt Ruth was ill—
I'm sorry she has suffered so; and still
I'm thankful something happened, so you stayed.
I'm sure my wedding would be incomplete
Without your presence. Selfish, I'm afraid
You'll think your Helen. But I love you so,
How can I be quite willing you should go?
Come Christmas Eve, or earlier. Let me know
And I will meet you, dearie! at the train.
Your happy, loving Helen."

Then the pain
That, hidden under later pain and care,
Had made no moan, but silent, seemed to sleep,

Woke from its trance-like lethargy, to steep
My tortured heart in anguish and despair.

I had relied too fully on my skill
In bending circumstances to my will:
And now I was rebuked and made to see
That God alone knoweth what is to be.

Then came a messenger from Vivian, who
Came not himself, as he was wont to do,
But sent his servant each new day to bring
A kindly message or an offering
Of juicy fruits to cool the lips of fever,
Or dainty hot-house blossoms, with their bloom
To brighten up the convalescent's room.
But now the servant only brought a line
From Vivian Dangerfield to Roy Montaine,
"Dear Sir, and Friend"—in letters bold and plain,
Written on cream-white paper, so it ran:
"It is the will and pleasure of Miss Trevor,
And therefore doubly so a wish of mine,
That you shall honor me next New Year Eve,
My wedding hour, by standing as best man.
Miss Trevor has six bridesmaids, I believe.
Being myself a novice in the art—
If I should fail in acting well my part,
I'll need protection 'gainst the regiment

Of outraged ladies. So, I pray, consent
To stand by me in time of need, and shield
Your friend sincerely, Vivian Dangerfield."

The last least hope had vanished; I must drain,
E'en to the dregs, this bitter cup of pain.

"The woods had donned their purple mantles."

"With vision trance-like."

PART VI.

THERE was a week of bustle and of hurry;
A stately home echoed to voices sweet,
Calling, replying; and to tripping feet
Of busy bridesmaids, running to and fro,
With all that girlish fluttering and flurry
Preceding such occasions.
Helen's room
Was like a lily-garden, all in bloom,
Decked with the dainty robes of her trousseau.
My robe was fashioned by swift, skilful hands—

A thing of beauty, elegant and rich,
A mystery of loopings, puffs and bands;
And as I watched it growing, stitch by stitch,
I felt as one might feel who should behold
With vision trance-like, where his body lay
In deathly slumber, simulating clay,
His grave-cloth sewed together, fold on fold.

I lived with ev'ry nerve upon the strain,
As men go into battle; and the pain,
That, more and more, to my sad heart revealed,
Grew ghastly with its horrors, was concealed
From mortal eyes by superhuman power,
That God bestowed upon me, hour by hour.

What night the Old Year gave unto the New
The key of human happiness and woe,
The pointed stars, upon their field of blue,
Shone, white and perfect, o'er a world below
Of snow-clad beauty; all the trees were dressed
In gleaming garments, decked with diadems,
Each seeming like a bridal-bidden guest,
Coming o'er-laden with a gift of gems.

The bustle of the dressing-room; the sound
Of eager voices in discourse; the clang
Of "sweet bells jangled"; thud of steel-clad feet
That beat swift music on the frozen ground—

All blent together in my brain, and rang
A medley of strange noises, incomplete,
And full of discords.
Then out on the night
Streamed from the open vestibule, a light
That lit the velvet blossoms which we trod
With all the hues of those that deck the sod.
The grand cathedral windows were ablaze
With gorgeous colors; through a sea of bloom,
Up the long aisle, to join the waiting groom,
The bridal cortege passed.

As some lost soul
Might surge on with the curious crowd, to gaze
Upon its coffined body, so I went
With that glad festal throng. The organ sent
Great waves of melody along the air,
That broke and fell, in liquid drops, like spray,
On happy hearts that listened. But to me
It sounded faintly, as if many miles away,
A troubled spirit, sitting in despair
Beside the sad and ever-moaning sea,
Gave utterance to sighing sounds of dole.
We paused before the altar. Framed in flowers,
The white-robed man of God stood forth.
I heard
The solemn service open; through long hours

I seemed to stand and listen, while each word
Fell on my ear as falls the sound of clay
Upon the coffin of the worshiped dead.
The stately father gave the bride away:
The bridegroom circled with a golden band
The taper finger of her dainty hand.
The last imposing, binding words were said—
"What God has joined let no man put asunder"—
And all my strife with self was at an end;
My lover was the husband of my friend.

How strangely, in some awful hour of pain,
External trifles with our sorrows blend!
I never hear the mighty organ's thunder,
I never catch the scent of heliotrope,
Nor see stained windows all ablaze with light,
Without that dizzy whirling of the brain,
And all the ghastly feeling of that night,
When my sick heart relinquished love and hope.

The pain we feel so keenly may depart,
And e'en its memory cease to haunt the heart;
But some slight thing, a perfume, or a sound
Will probe the closed recesses of the wound,
And for a moment bring the old-time smart.

Congratulations, kisses, tears and smiles,
Good-byes and farewells given; then across

"The last imposing, binding words were said."

The snowy waste of weary wintry miles,
Back to my girlhood's home, where, through each
room,
For evermore pale phantoms of delight
Should aimless wander, always in my sight,
Pointing, with ghostly fingers, to the tomb
Wet with the tears of living pain and loss.
The sleepless nights of watching and of care,
Followed by that one week of keenest pain,
Taxing my weakened system, and my brain,
Brought on a ling'ring illness.

Day by day,
In that strange, apathetic state I lay,
Of mental and of physical despair.
I had no pain, no fever, and no chill,
But lay without ambition, strength, or will,
Knowing no wish for anything but rest,
Which seemed, of all God's store of gifts, the best.
Physicians came and shook their heads and sighed;
And to their score of questions I replied,
With but one languid answer, o'er and o'er,
"I am so weary—weary—nothing more."

I slept, and dreamed I was some feathered thing,
Flying through space with ever-aching wing,
Seeking a ship called Rest, all snowy white,

That sailed and sailed before me, just in sight,
But always one unchanging distance kept,
And woke more weary than before I slept.

I slept, and dreamed I ran to win a prize,
A hand from heaven held down before my eyes.
All eagerness I sought it—it was gone,
But shone in all its beauty farther on.
I ran, and ran, and ran, in eager quest
Of that great prize, whereon was written "rest,"
Which ever just beyond my reach did gleam,
And wakened doubly weary with my dream.

I dreamed I was a crystal drop of rain,
That saw a snow-white lily on the plain,
And left the cloud to nestle in her breast.
I fell and fell, but nevermore found rest—
I fell and fell, but found no stopping place,
Through leagues and leagues of never-ending space,
While space illimitable stretched before.

And all these dreams but wearied me the more.

Familiar voices sounded in my room—
Aunt Ruth's, and Roy's, and Helen's: but they seemed
A part of some strange fancy I had dreamed,
And now remembered dimly.

"May came, lightsome footed."

Wrapped in gloom,
My mind, o'er-taxed, lost hold of time at last,
Ignored its future, and forgot its past,
And groped along the present, as a light,
Carried, uncovered, through the fogs of night,
Will flicker faintly.
But I felt, at length,
When March winds brought vague rumors of the spring,
A certain sense of "restlessness with rest."
My aching frame was weary of repose,
And wanted action.

Then slow-creeping strength
Came back with Mem'ry, hand in hand, to bring
And lay upon my sore and bleeding breast,
Grim-visaged Recollection's thorny rose.
I gained, and failed. One day could ride and walk,
The next would find me prostrate; while a flock
Of ghostly thoughts, like phantom birds, would flit
About the chambers of my heart, or sit,
Pale spectres of the past, with folded wings,
Perched, silently, upon the voiceless strings,
That once resounded to Hope's happy lays.

So passed the ever-changing April days.
When May came, lightsome footed, o'er the lea,
Accompanied by kind Aunt Ruth and Roy,
I bade farewell to home with secret joy,
And turned my wan face eastward to the sea.
Roy planned our route of travel: for all lands
Were one to him. Or Egypt's burning sands,
Or Alps of Switzerland, or stately Rome,
All were familiar as the fields of home.

There was a year of wand'ring to and fro,
Like restless spirits; scaling mountain heights;
Dwelling among the countless, rare delights
Of lands historic; turning dusty pages,

Stamped with the tragedies of mighty ages;
Gazing upon the scenes of bloody acts,
Of kings long buried—bare, unvarnished facts,
Surpassing wildest fictions of the brain;
Rubbing against all people, high and low,
And by this contact feeling Self to grow
Smaller and less important, and the vein
Of human kindness deeper, seeing God,
Unto the humble delver of the sod,
And to the ruling monarch on the throne,
Has given hope, ambition, joy, and pain,
And that all hearts have feelings like our own.

There is no school that disciplines the mind,
And broadens thought, like contact with mankind.
The college-prisoned greybeard, who has burned
The midnight lamp, and book-bound knowledge
learned,
Till sciences and classics hold no lore
He has not conned and studied, o'er and o'er,
Is but a babe in wisdom, when compared
With some unlettered wand'rer, who has shared
The hospitalities of every land;
Felt touch of brother in each proffered hand;
Made man his study, and the world his college,
And gained this grand epitome of knowledge:
Each human being has a heart and soul,

"Conscious of a something lacking."

And self is but an atom of the whole.
I hold he is best learnèd and most wise,
Who best and most can love and sympathize.
Book-wisdom makes us vain and self-contained;
Our banded minds go round in little grooves;
But constant friction with the world removes
These iron foes to freedom, and we rise
To grander heights, and, all untrammeled, find
A better atmosphere and clearer skies:

And through its broadened realm, no longer chained,
Thought travels freely, leaving Self behind.

Where'er we chanced to wander or to roam,
Glad letters came from Helen; happy things,
Like little birds that followed on swift wings,
Bringing their tender messages from home.
Her days were poems, beautiful, complete.
The rhythm perfect, and the burden sweet.
She was so happy—happy, and so blest.

My heart had found contentment in that year.
With health restored, my life seemed full of cheer.
The heart of youth turns ever to the light;
Sorrow and gloom may curtain it like night,
But, in its very anguish and unrest,
It beats and tears the pall-like folds away,
And finds again the sunlight of the day.

And yet, despite the changes without measure,
Despite sight-seeing, round on round of pleasure;
Despite new friends, new suitors, still my heart
Was conscious of a something lacking, where
Love once had dwelt, and afterward despair.
Now love was buried; and despair had flown
Before the healthful zephyrs that had blown
From heights serene and lofty; and the place

Where both had dwelt, was empty, voiceless space.
And so I took my long-loved study, art,
The dreary vacuum in my life to fill,
And worked, and labored, with a right good will.
Aunt Ruth and I took rooms in Rome; while Roy
Lingered in Scotland, with his new-found joy.
A dainty little lassie, Grace Kildare,
Had snared him in her flossy, flaxen hair,
And made him captive.

We were thrown, by chance,
In contact with her people while in France
The previous season: she was wholly sweet
And fair and gentle; so näive, and yet
So womanly, she was at once the pet
Of all our party; and, ere many days,
Won by her fresh face, and her artless ways,
Roy fell a helpless captive at her feet.
Her home was in the Highlands; and she came
Of good old stock, of fair untarnished fame.

Through all these months Roy had been true as steel;
And by his every action made me feel
He was my friend and brother, and no more.
The same big-souled and trusty friend of yore.
Yet, in my secret heart, I wished I knew
Whether the love he felt one time was dead,

Or only hidden, for my sake, from view.
So when he came to me one day, and said,
The velvet blackness of his eyes ashine
With light of love and triumph: "Cousin, mine,
Congratulate me! She whom I adore
Has pledged to me the promise of her hand·
Her heart I have already," I was glad
With double gladness, for it freed my mind
Of fear that he, in secret, might be sad.

From March till June had left her moons behind,
And merged her rose-red beauty in July,
There was no message from my native land.
Then came a few brief lines, by Vivian penned:
Death had been near to Helen, but passed by;
The danger was now over. God was kind;
The mother and the child were both alive;
No other child was ever known to thrive
As throve this one, nurse had been heard to say.
The infant was a wonder, every way.
And, at command of Helen, he would send
A lock of baby's golden hair to me.
And did I, on my honor, ever see
Such hair before? Helen would write, ere long:
She gained quite slowly, but would soon be strong—
Stronger than ever, so the doctors said.
I took the tiny ringlet, golden—fair,

Mayhap his hand had severed from the head
Of his own child, and pressed it to my cheek
And to my lips, and kissed it o'er and o'er.
All my maternal instincts seemed to rise,
And clamor for their rights, while my wet eyes,
Rained tears upon the silken tress of hair.
The woman struggled with her heart before!
It was the mother in me now did speak,
Moaning, like Rachel, that her babes were not,
And crying out against her barren lot.

Once I bemoaned the long and lonely years
That stretched before me, dark with love's eclipse;
And thought how my unmated heart would miss
The shelter of a broad and manly breast—
The strong, bold arm—the tender clinging kiss—
And all pure love's possessions, manifold;
But now I wept a flood of bitter tears,
Thinking of little heads of shining gold,
That would not on my bosom sink to rest;
Of little hands that would not touch my cheek;
Of little lisping voices, and sweet lips,
That never in my list'ning ear would speak
The blessed name of mother.
Oh, in woman
How mighty is the love of offspring! Ere
Unto her wond'ring, untaught mind unfolds

"Cloudless day."

"Alps of Switzerland."

The myst'ry that is half divine, half human,
Of life and birth, the love of unborn souls
Within her, and the mother-yearning creeps
Through her warm heart, and stirs its hidden deeps,

And grows and strengthens with each riper year.
As storms may gather in a placid sky,
And spend their fury, and then pass away,
Leaving again the blue of cloudless day,
E'en so the tempest of my grief passed by.
'T was weak to mourn for what I had resigned,
With the deliberate purpose of my mind,
To my sweet friend

Relinquishing my love,
I gave my dearest hope of joy to her.
If God, from out his boundless store above,
Had chosen added blessings to confer,
I would rejoice, for her sake—not repine
That th' immortal treasures were not mine.

Better my lonely sorrow, than to know
My selfish joy had been another's woe;
Better my grief and my strength to control,
Than the despair of her frail-bodied soul;
Better to go on, loveless, to the end,
Than wear love's rose, whose thorn had slain my friend.

Work is the salve that heals the wounded heart
With will most resolute I set my aim
To enter on the weary race for Fame,
And if I failed to climb the dizzy height,

To reach some point of excellence in art.
E'en as the Maker held earth incomplete,
Till man was formed, and placed upon the sod,
The perfect, living image of his God,
All landscape scenes were lacking in my sight,
Wherein the human figure had no part.

In that, all lines of symmetry did meet—
All hues of beauty mingle. So I brought
Enthusiasm in abundance, thought,
Much study, and some talent, day by day,
To help me in my efforts to portray
The wondrous power, majesty and grace
Stamped on some form, or looking from some face.

This was to be my specialty: To take
Human emotion for my theme, and make
The unassisted form divine express
Anger or Sorrow, Pleasure, Pain, Distress;
And thus to build Fame's monument above
The grave of my departed hope and love.

This is not Genius. Genius spreads its wings
And soars beyond itself, or selfish things.
Talent has need of stepping-stones: some cross,
Some cheated purpose, some great pain or loss,

Must lay the groundwork, and arouse ambition,
Before it labors onward to fruition.

But, as the lark from beds of bloom will rise
And sail and sing among the very skies,
Still mounting near and nearer to the light,
Impelled alone by love of upward flight,
So Genius soars—it does not need to climb—
Upon God-given wings, to heights sublime.

Some sportsman's shot, grazing the singer's throat,
Some venomous assault of birds of prey,
May speed its flight toward the realm of day,
And tinge with triumph every liquid note.
So deathless Genius mounts but higher yet,
When Strife and Envy think to slay or fret.

There is no balking Genius. Only death
Can silence it, or hinder. While there's breath
Or sense of feeling, it will spurn the sod,
And lift itself to glory, and to God.
The acorn sprouted—weeds nor flowers can choke
The certain growth of th' upreaching oak.
Talent was mine, not Genius; and my mind
Seemed bound by chains, and would not leave behind

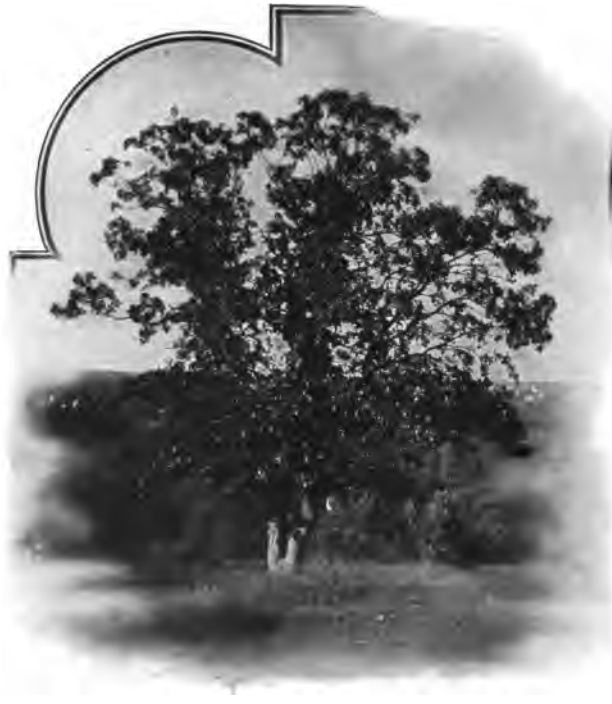
Its selfish love and sorrow.
Did I strive
To picture some emotion, lo! *his* eyes,
Of emerald beauty, dark as ocean dyes,
Looked from the canvas: and my buried pain
Rose from its grave, and stood by me alive.
Whate'er my subject, in some hue or line,
The glorious beauty of his face would shine.

So for a time my labor seemed in vain,
Since it but freshened, and made keener yet,
The grief my heart was striving to forget.

While in his form all strength and magnitude
With grace and supple sinews were entwined,
While in his face all beauties were combined
Of perfect features, intellect and truth,
With all that fine rich coloring of youth,
How could my brush portray aught good or fair
Wherein no fatal likeness should intrude
Of him my soul had worshiped?

But, at last,
Setting a watch upon my unwise heart
That thus would mix its sorrow with my art,
I resolutely shut away the past,
And made the toilsome present passing bright

With dreams of what was hidden from my sight
In the far distant future, when the soil
Should yield me golden fruit for all my toil.



"Th' upreaching oak."

"His child."

PART VII.

WITH much hard labor and some pleasure fraught,
The months rolled by me noiselessly, that taught
My hand to grow more skillful in its art,
Strengthened my daring dream of fame, and brought
Sweet hope and resignation to my heart.

Brief letters came from Helen, now and then;
She was quite well—oh, yes! quite well, indeed!
But still so weak and nervous. By and by,
When baby, being older, should not need
Such constant care, she would grow strong again.
She was as happy as a soul could be;
No least cloud hovered in her azure sky;
She had not thought life held such depths of bliss.
Dear baby sent Maurine a loving kiss,
And said she was a naughty, naughty girl,
Not to come home and see ma's little pearl.
No gift of costly jewels, or of gold,
Had been so precious or so dear to me,
As each brief line wherein her joy was told.
It lightened toil, and took the edge from pain,
Knowing my sacrifice was not in vain.

Roy purchased fine estates in Scotland, where
He built a pretty villa-like retreat.
And when the Roman Summer's languid heat
Made work a punishment, I turned my face
Toward the Highlands, and with Roy and Grace
Found rest and freedom from all thought and care.

I was a willing worker. Not an hour
Passed idly by me: each, I would employ
To some good purpose, ere it glided on

"The fields, the wood, the lake."

To swell the tide of hours forever gone.
My first completed picture, known as "Joy,"
Won pleasant words of praise. "Possesses power,"
"Displays much talent," "Very fairly done,"
So fell the comments on my grateful ear.

Swift in the wake of Joy, and always near,
Walks her sad sister Sorrow. So my brush
Began depicting sorrow, heavy-eyed,
With pallid visage, ere the rosy flush
Upon the beaming face of Joy had dried.
The careful study of long months, it won
Golden opinions; even bringing forth
That certain sign of merit—a critique
Which set both pieces down as daubs, and weak

As empty heads that sang their praises—so
Proving conclusively the pictures' worth.
These critics and reviewers do not use
Their precious ammunition to abuse
A worthless work. That, left alone, they know
Will find its proper level; and they aim
Their batteries at rising works which claim
Too much of public notice. But this shot
Resulted only in some noise, which brought
A dozen people, where one came before
To view my pictures; and I had my hour
Of holding those frail baubles, Fame and Pow'r.
An English Baron who had lived two score
Of his allotted three score years and ten,
Bought both the pieces. He was very kind,
And so attentive, I, not being blind,
Must understand his meaning.

Therefore, when
He said,
"Sweet friend, whom I would make my wife,
The 'Joy' and 'Sorrow' this dear hand portrayed
I have in my possession: now resign
Into my careful keeping, and make mine,
The joy and sorrow of your future life,"—
I was prepared to answer, but delayed,
Grown undecided suddenly.

My mind
Argued the matter coolly pro and con,
And made resolve to speed his wooing on
And grant him favor. He was good and kind;
Not young, no doubt he would be quite content
With my respect, nor miss an ardent love;
Could give me ties of family and home;
And then, perhaps, my mind was not above
Setting some value on a titled name—
Ambitious woman's weakness!

Then my art
Would be encouraged and pursued the same,
And I could spend my winters all in Rome.
Love never more could touch my wasteful heart
That all its wealth upon one object spent.
Existence would be very bleak and cold,
After long years, when I was gray and old,
With neither home nor children.
Once a wife,
I would forget the sorrow of my life,
And pile new sods upon the grave of pain.
My mind so argued; and my sad heart heard,
But made no comment.
Then the Baron spoke,
And waited for my answer. All in vain
I strove for strength to utter that one word

My mind dictated. Moments rolled away—
Until at last my torpid heart awoke,
And forced my trembling lips to say him nay.
And then my eyes with sudden tears o'erran,
In pity for myself and for this man
Who stood before me, lost in pained surprise.

"Dear friend," I cried, "Dear generous friend, forgive
A troubled woman's weakness! As I live,
In truth I meant to answer otherwise.
From out its store, my heart can give you naught
But honor and respect; and yet methought
I would give willing answer, did you sue.
But now I know 't were cruel wrong I planned;
Taking a heart that beat with love most true,
And giving in exchange an empty hand.
Who weds for love alone, may not be wise;
Who weds without it, angels must despise.
Love and respect together must combine
To render marriage holy and divine;
And lack of either, sure as Fate, destroys
Continuation of the nuptial joys,
And brings regret, and gloomy discontent,
To put to rout each tender sentiment.
Nay, nay! I will not burden all your life
By that possession—an unloving wife;

"I leave a soul immortal in your charge."

Nor will I take the sin upon my soul
Of wedding where my heart goes not in whole.
However bleak may be my single lot,
I will not stain my life with such a blot.
Dear friend, farewell! the earth is very wide;
It holds some fairer woman for your bride;
I would I had a heart to give to you,
But, lacking it, can only say—adieu!"

He whom temptation never has assailed,
Knows not that subtle sense of moral strength;
When sorely tried, we waver, but at length,
Rise up and turn away, not having failed.

The Autumn of the third year came and went;
The mild Italian winter was half spent,
When this brief message came across the sea:
"My darling! I am dying. Come to me.
Love, which so long the growing truth concealed,
Stands pale within its shadow. O, my sweet!
This heart of mine grows fainter with each beat—
Dying with very weight of bliss. O, come!
And take the legacy I leave to you,
Before these lips forevermore are dumb.
In life or death, Yours, Helen Dangerfield."
This plaintive letter bore a month old date;
And, wild with fears lest I had come too late,

I bade the old world and new friends adieu,
And with Aunt Ruth, who long had sighed for
home,
I turned my back on glory, art, and Rome.
All selfish thoughts were merged in one wild fear
That she for whose dear sake my heart had bled,
Rather than her sweet eyes should know one tear,
Was passing from me; that she might be dead;
And, dying, had been sorely grieved with me,
Because I made no answer to her plea.

"O, ship, that sailest slowly, slowly on,
Make haste before a wasting life is gone!
Make haste that I may catch a fleeting breath!
And true in life, be true e'en unto death.

"O, ship, sail on! and bear me o'er the tide
To her for whom my woman's heart once died.
Sail, sail, O, ship! for she hath need of me,
And I would know what her last wish may be!
I have been true, so true, through all the past.
Sail, sail, O, ship! I would not fail at last."

So prayed my heart still o'er, and ever o'er,
Until the weary lagging ship reached shore.
All sad with fears that I had come too late,
By that strange source whence men communicate.

Though miles on miles of space between them lie,
I spoke with Vivian: "Does she live? Reply."
The answer came. "She lives, but hasten, friend!
Her journey draweth swiftly to its end."

Ah me! ah me! when each remembered spot,
My own dear home, the lane that led to his—
The fields, the woods, the lake, burst on my sight,
Oh! then, Self rose up in asserting might;
Oh, then, my bursting heart all else forgot,
But those sweet early years of lost delight,
Of hope, defeat, of anguish and of bliss.

I have a theory, vague, undefined,
That each emotion of the human mind,
Love, pain or passion, sorrow or despair,
Is a live spirit, dwelling in the air,
Until it takes possession of some breast;
And, when at length, grown weary of unrest,
We rise up strong and cast it from the heart,
And bid it leave us wholly, and depart,
It does not die, it cannot die; but goes
And mingles with some restless wind that blows
About the region where it had its birth.
And though we wander over all the earth,
That spirit waits, and lingers, year by year,
Invisible, and clothèd like the air,

Hoping that we may yet again draw near,
And it may haply take us unaware,
And once more find the shelter in the breast
It stirred of old with pleasure or unrest.

Told by my heart, and wholly positive,
Some old emotion long had ceased to live;
That, were it called, it could not hear or come,
Because it was so voiceless and so dumb,
Yet, passing where it first sprang into life,
My very soul has suddenly been rife
With all the old intensity of feeling.
It seemed a living spirit, which came stealing
Into my heart from that departed day;
Exiled emotion, which I fancied clay.

So now into my troubled heart, above
The present's pain and sorrow, crept the love
And strife and passion of a by-gone hour,
Possessed of all their olden might and power.
'T was but a moment, and the spell was broken
By pleasant words of greeting, gently spoken,
And Vivian stood before us.
But I saw
In him the husband of my friend alone.
The old emotions might at times return,
And smold'ring fires leap up an hour and burn;

"My childhood's home."

But never yet had I transgressed God's law,
By looking on the man I had resigned,
With any hidden feeling in my mind,
Which she, his wife, my friend, might not have known.
He was but little altered. From his face
The nonchalant and almost haughty grace,
The lurking laughter waiting in his eyes,
The years had stolen, leaving in their place
A settled sadness, which was not despair,
Nor was it gloom, nor weariness, nor care,
But something like the vapor o'er the skies
Of Indian summer, beautiful to see,
But spoke of frosts, which had been and would be.
There was that in his face which cometh not,
Save when the soul has many a battle fought,
And conquered self by constant sacrifice.

There are two sculptors, who, with chisels fine,
Render the plainest features half divine.
All other artists strive and strive in vain,
To picture beauty perfect and complete.
Their statues only crumble at their feet,
Without the master touch of Faith and Pain.
And now his face, that perfect seemed before,
Chiseled by these two careful artists, wore
A look exalted, which the spirit gives

When soul has conquered, and the body lives
Subservient to its bidding.

In a room
Which curtained out the February gloom,
And, redolent with perfume, bright with flowers,
Rested the eye like one of Summer's bowers,
I found my Helen, who was less mine now
Than Death's; for on the marble of her brow,
His seal was stamped indelibly.

Her form
Was like the slender willow, when some storm
Has stripped it bare of foliage. Her face,
Pale always, now was ghastly in its hue:
And, like two lamps, in some dark, hollow place,
Burned her large eyes, grown more intensely blue.
Her fragile hands displayed each cord and vein,
And on her mouth was that drawn look, of pain
Which is not uttered. Yet an inward light
Shone through and made her wasted features bright
With an unearthly beauty; and an awe
Crept o'er me, gazing on her, for I saw
She was so near to Heaven that I seemed
To look upon the face of one redeemed.
She turned the brilliant luster of her eyes
Upon me. She had passed beyond surprise,
Or any strong emotion linked with clay.

"Lo! the bridegroom."

But as I glided to her where she lay,
A smile, celestial in its sweetness, wreathed
Her pallid features. "Welcome home!" she breathed.
"Dear hands! dear lips! I touch you and rejoice."
And like the dying echo of a voice
Were her faint tones that thrilled upon my ear.

I fell upon my knees beside her bed;
All agonies within my heart were wed,
While to the aching numbness of my grief,
Mine eyes refused the solace of a tear,—

The tortured soul's most merciful relief.
Her wasted hand caressed my bended head
For one sad, sacred moment. Then she said
In that low tone so like the wind's refrain,
"Maurine, my own! give not away to pain;
The time is precious. Ere another dawn
My soul may hear the summons and pass on.
Arise, sweet sister! rest a little while,
And when refreshed, come hither. I grow weak
With every hour that passes. I must speak
And make my dying wishes known to-night.
Go now." And in the halo of her smile,
Which seemed to fill the room with golden light,
I turned and left her.

Later in the gloom,
Of coming night, I entered that dim room,
And sat down by her. Vivian held her hand:
And on the pillow at her side, there smiled
The beauteous count'nance of a sleeping child.

"Maurine," spoke Helen, "for three blissful years,
My heart has dwelt in an enchanted land;
And I have drank the sweetened cup of joy,
Without one drop of anguish or alloy.
And so, ere Pain embitters it with gall,
Or sad-eyed Sorrow fills it full of tears,

And bids me quaff, which is the Fate of all
Who linger long upon this troubled way,
God takes me to the realm of Endless Day,
To mingle with his angels, who alone
Can understand such bliss as I have known.
I do not murmur. God has heaped my measure,
In three short years, full to the brim with pleasure;
And, from the fullness of an earthly love,
I pass to th' Immortal arms above,
Before I even brush the skirts of Woe.

"I leave my aged parents here below,
With none to comfort them. Maurine, sweet friend!
Be kind to them, and love them to the end,
Which may not be far distant.
And I leave
A soul immortal in your charge, Maurine.
From this most holy, sad and sacred eve,
Till God shall claim her, she is yours to keep,
To love and shelter, to protect and guide."
She touched the slumb'ring cherub at her side,
And Vivian gently bore her, still asleep,
And laid the precious burden on my breast.

A solemn silence fell upon the scene.
And when the sleeping infant smiled, and pressed

My yielding bosom with her waxen cheek,
I felt it would be sacrilege to speak,
Such wordless joy possessed me.
Oh! at last
This infant, who, in that tear-blotted past,
Had caused my soul such travail, was my own:
Through all the lonely coming years to be
Mine own to cherish—wholly mine alone.
And what I mourned so hopelessly as lost
Was now restored, and given back to me.

The dying voice continued:
"In this child
You yet have me, whose mortal life she cost.
But all that was most pure and undefiled,
And good within me, lives in her again.
Maurine, my husband loves me; yet I know,
Moving about the wide world, to and fro,
And through, and in the busy haunts of men,
Not always will his heart be dumb with woe,
But sometime waken to a later love.
Nay, Vivian, hush! my soul has passed above
All selfish feelings! I would have it so.
While I am with the angels, blest and glad,
I would not have you sorrowing and sad,
In loneliness go mourning to the end.
But, love! I could not trust to any other

"I sat in that same sunny portico"

The sacred office of a foster-mother
To this sweet cherub, save my own heart-friend.

"Teach her to love her father's name, Maurine,
Where'er he wanders. Keep my memory green
In her young heart, and lead her in her youth,
To drink from th' eternal fount of Truth;
Vex her not with sectarian discourse,
Nor strive to teach her piety by force;
Ply not her mind with harsh and narrow creeds,
Nor frighten her with an avenging God,
Who rules his subjects with a burning rod;
But teach her that each mortal simply needs
To grow in hate of hate and love of love,
To gain a kingdom in the courts above.

"Let her be free and natural as the flowers,
That smile and nod throughout the summer hours.
Let her rejoice in all the joys of youth,
But first impress upon her mind this truth:
No lasting happiness is e'er attained
Save when the heart some *other* seeks to please.
The cup of selfish pleasures soon is drained,
And full of gall and bitterness the lees.
Next to her God, teach her to love her land;
In her young bosom light the patriot's flame
Until the heart within her shall expand

With love and fervor at her country's name
No coward-mother bears a valiant son.
And this, my last wish, is an earnest one.

"Maurine, my o'er-taxed strength is waning; you
Have heard my wishes, and you will be true
In death as you have been in life, my own!
Now leave me for a little while alone
With him—my husband. Dear love! I shall rest
So sweetly with no care upon my breast.
Good night, Maurine, come to me in the morning."

But lo! the bridegroom with no further warning
Came for her at the dawning of the day.
She heard his voice, and smiled, and passed away
Without a struggle.
Leaning o'er her bed
To give her greeting, I found but her clay,
And Vivian bowed beside it.
And I said,
"Dear friend! my soul shall treasure thy request,
And when the night of fever and unrest
Melts in the morning of Eternity,
Like a freed bird, then I will come to thee.

"I will come to thee in the morning, sweet!
I have been true; and soul with soul shall meet

Before God's throne, and shall not be afraid.
Thou gav'st me trust, and it was not betrayed.

"I will come to thee in the morning, dear!
The night is dark. I do not know how near
The morn may be of that Eternal Day;
I can but keep my faithful watch and pray.

"I will come to thee in the morning, love!
Wait for me on the Eternal Heights above.
The way is troubled where my feet must climb;
Ere I shall tread the mountain-top sublime.

"I will come in the morning, O, mine own!
But for a time must grope my way alone,
Through tears and sorrow, till the Day shall dawn,
And I shall hear the summons, and pass on.

"I will come in the morning. Rest secure!
My hope is certain and my faith is sure.
After the gloom and darkness of the night
I will come to thee with the morning light.'

* * * * * *

Three peaceful years slipped silently away.
We dwelt together in my childhood's home,
Aunt Ruth and I, and sunny-hearted May.
She was a fair and most exquisite child;

Her pensive face was delicate and mild
Like her dead mother's; but through her dear eyes
Her father smiled upon me, day by day.
Afar in foreign countries did he roam,
Now resting under Italy's blue skies,
And now with Roy in Scotland.
And he sent
Brief, friendly letters, telling where he went
And what he saw, addressed to May or me.
And I would write and tell him how she grew—
And how she talked about him o'er the sea
In her sweet baby fashion; how she knew
His picture in the album; how each day
She knelt and prayed the blessed Lord would bring
Her own papa back to his little May.

It was a warm bright morning in the Spring.
I sat in that same sunny portico,
Where I was sitting seven years ago
When Vivian came. My eyes were full of tears,
As I looked back across the checkered years.
How many were the changes they had brought!
Pain, death, and sorrow! but the lesson taught
To my young heart had been of untold worth.
I had learned how to "suffer and grow strong"—
That knowledge which best serves us here on earth,
And brings reward in Heaven.

"Laid her downy cheek against her father."

Oh! how long
The years had been since that June morning when
I heard his step upon the walk, and yet
I seemed to hear its echo still.
Just then
Down that same path I turned my eyes, tear-wet,
And lo! the wanderer from a foreign land
Stood there before me!—holding out his hand
And smiling with those wondrous eyes of old.
To hide my tears, I ran and brought his child;

But she was shy, and clung to me, when told
This was papa, for whom her prayers were said.
She dropped her eyes and shook her little head,
And would not by his coaxing be beguiled,
Or go to him.
Aunt Ruth was not at home,
And we two sat and talked as strangers might,
Of distant countries which we both had seen.
But once I thought I saw his large eyes light
With sudden passion, when there came a pause
In our chit-chat, and then he spoke:
"Maurine,
I saw a number of your friends in Rome.
We talked of you. They seemed surprised, because
You were not 'mong the seekers for a name.
They thought your whole ambition was for fame."

"It might have been," I answered, "when my heart
Had nothing else to fill it. Now my art
Is but a recreation. I have *this*
To love and live for, which I had not then."
And leaning down, I pressed a tender kiss
Upon my child's fair brow.

"And yet," he said,
The old light leaping to his eyes again,
"And yet, Maurine, they say you might have wed

A noble Baron! one of many men
Who laid their hearts and fortunes at your feet.
Why won the bravest of them no return?"

I bowed my head, nor dared his gaze to meet.
On cheek and brow I felt the red blood burn,
And strong emotion strangled speech.
He rose
And came and knelt beside me.
"Sweet! my sweet!"
He murmured softly, "God in Heaven knows
How well I loved you seven years ago.
He only knows my anguish, and my grief,
When your own acts forced on me the belief
That I had been your plaything and your toy.
Yet from his lips I since have learned that Roy
Held no place nearer than a friend and brother.
And then a faint suspicion, undefined,
Of what had been—was—might be, stirred my mind,
And that great love, I thought died at a blow,
Rose up within me, strong with hope and life.

"Before all heaven and the angel mother
Of this sweet child that slumbers on your heart,
Maurine, Maurine, I claim you for my wife—
Mine own, forever, until death shall part!"

Through happy mists of upward welling tears,
I leaned, and looked into his beauteous eyes.
"Dear heart," I said, "if she who dwells above
Looks down upon us, from yon azure skies,
She can but bless us, knowing all these years
My soul had yearned in silence for the love
That crowned her life, and left mine own so bleak.
I turned you from me for her fair, frail sake.
For her sweet child's, and my own, I take
You back to be all mine, for evermore."

Just then the child upon my breast awoke
From her light sleep, and laid her downy cheek
Against her father as he knelt by me.
And this unconscious action seemed to be
A silent blessing, which the mother spoke
Gazing upon us from the mystic shore.

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MAR 31 '53 H